

100th
ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL

HISTORY
of
WAR

BATTLE OF THE SOMME



PLUS:
THE BATTLE
OF VERDUN



The story of the Great War's most influential campaign

BATTLE OF THE SOMME

The Battle of the Somme was one of history's bloodiest campaigns. Over the course of a year, a series of offensives left more than 1 million men dead or injured. By all accounts, the devastating confrontations at the battles of Verdun and the Somme marked a defining moment in the Allies' ultimate victory in the Great War. Retrace the footsteps of the characters involved, from those who endured unparalleled hardship on the frontline to the big players in whose hands their fate lay. Follow the course of events by examining authentic artefacts – including battle maps, telegrams and even pigeon-carried directives – as well as first-hand accounts by way of personal letters, drawings and diary entries. One hundred years on, remember the brutality and bloodshed experienced on the banks of the River Somme between 1 July and 18 November 1916.



BATTLE OF THE SOMME



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**HISTORY
of
WAR**
bookazine series



MAP KEY

Common symbols used on maps in this book

NATIONAL COLOURS

-  British, Dominion & Empire
-  French
-  German

SIZE OF MILITARY UNITS

-  Army
-  Corps
-  Division
-  Brigade
-  Regiment
-  Battalion

MILITARY TYPES

-  Infantry
-  Tanks
-  Cavalry

MILITARY SYMBOLS

- XXXX- Army group boundary line
- XXX- Army boundary line
- XX- Corps boundary line
- X- Division boundary line
-  Troops attacking
-  Unsuccessful attack
-  Planned withdrawal





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A DEFINING YEAR

1916 was a watershed moment in the First World War on the Western Front. The battles of Verdun and the Somme marked the beginning of the end for the German army, although it is easier to discern this with the benefit of hindsight than it was at the time.

The German chose not to make an all-out effort in the East to knock the Russians out of the war, while carrying out a holding operation in the West. Their decision instead to attack the French at Verdun ranks as one of those key strategic wartime moves that led in the end to one side winning or losing it. In this case, the German decision led to their loss of the war.

By the time it became apparent that almost as many Germans as Frenchmen were dying at Verdun for little gain, two other events had added to the pressure on Germany. The Kaiser's precious High Seas Fleet had been outfought at Jutland on 31 May 1916, and was now back in harbour. It would emerge just twice more in the war to confront its jailer, the British Grand Fleet.

Both sorties ended with the High Seas Fleet slinking back into port without giving battle.

The Anglo-French offensive on the Somme which began on 1 July 1916 added to the discomfiture of the German High Command, headed by its supreme war lord, Kaiser Wilhelm II. The attack signalled the growing power of the British army and demonstrated that, despite fearful losses at Verdun, the French army's morale was still holding.

Nowadays, the Battle of the Somme is synonymous in Britain with disaster and the futility of war. This is because the huge numbers of casualties suffered by the British army appalled the British public, whose misreading of history persuaded them that Britain's proper role in war was making a major contribution at sea, and that continental European allies should shoulder the larger part of the burden of engaging the enemy on land – and consequently suffer most of the losses.

In fact, it is fairer to describe the Somme as the “crucible” of the British army, since it was the





first time that Britain had deployed a mass army of continental size against the main body of the enemy. By 1916, the British army was made up largely of men who had answered Field Marshal Lord Kitchener's call for volunteers in 1914. He had at that time predicted that the war would last at least three years and require Britain to fight on land as a major player.

This army, popularly called "Kitchener's", or the "New Army", was only half-trained when it met the most formidable land force in the world at the time, the well-drilled German army. The British army suffered massive losses, although it inflicted almost as many casualties on its opponents. In the process it learned many lessons, so that by the autumn of 1918 it was able, in the space of three months, to fight and win a series of battles, each as big or bigger than any fought by the British in the Second World War.

For the French, who had until July 1916 endured by far the major share of the fighting on

the Western Front, the bloodletting at Verdun was almost – but not quite – more than any army could possibly be expected to bear. The final straw was the disastrous Nivelle offensive in 1917, after which the British took on the major share of the unrelenting pressure being exerted on the German army.

By the end of 1916, Germany was faced with the prospect of losing the war, and on 1 February 1917 took the fateful step of declaring unrestricted submarine warfare. This brought America into the war on the Allied side, sealing Germany's fate.

It is almost impossible for us to imagine the conditions under which the French, British and German soldiers fought in that watershed year of 1916. But I hope that the many images and rare memorabilia included in this book will give readers some idea of what the fighting men on the frontline endured.

JULIAN THOMPSON



The situation at Verdun before the German offensive.

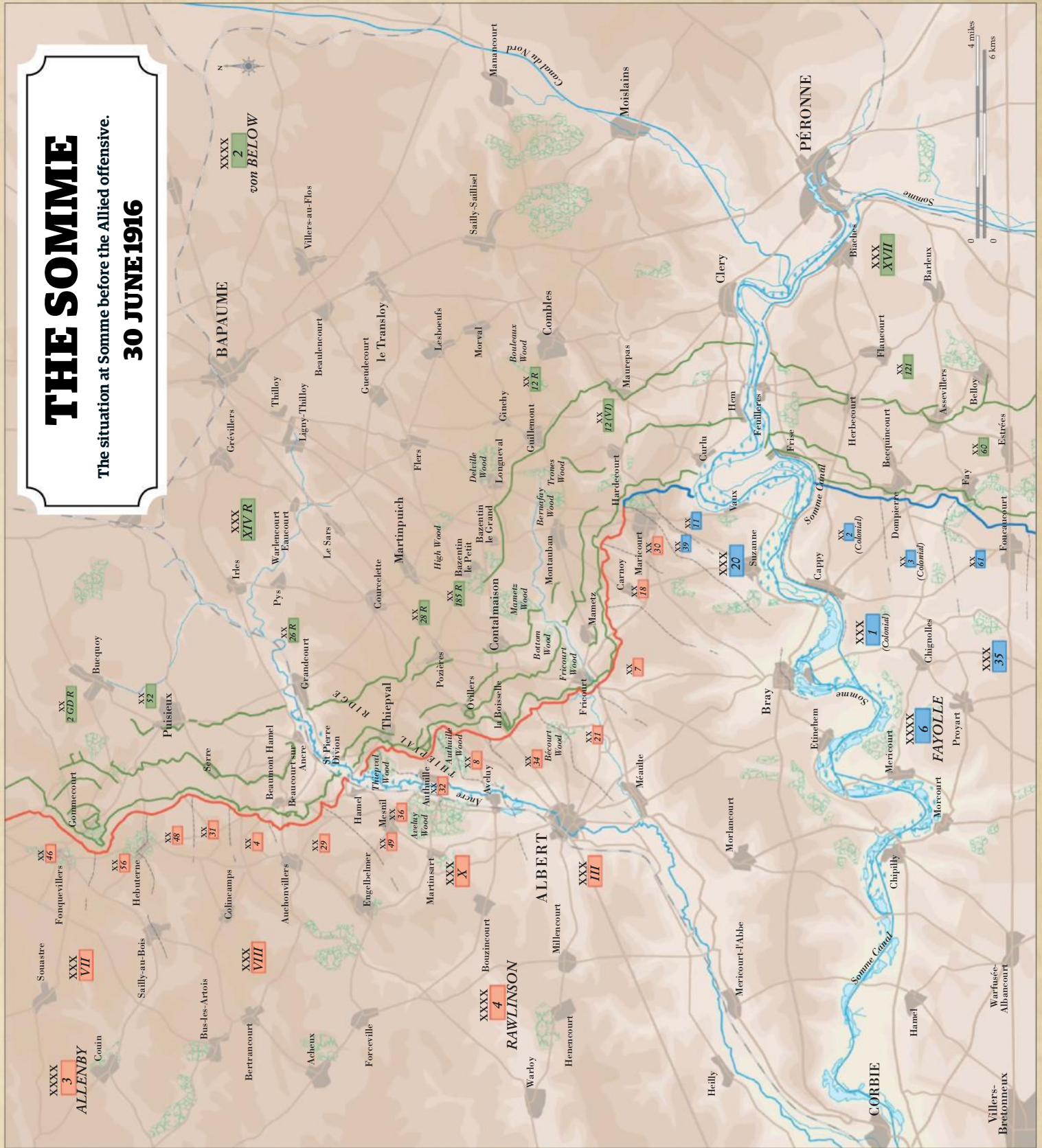
20 FEBRUARY 1916



THE SOMME

The situation at Somme before the Allied offensive.

30 JUNE 1916



GRAND STRATEGY

The Allied Plans for 1916

On 6 December 1915, General Joffre, the French Commander in Chief, held a conference for the Allied commanders at his headquarters, Grand Quartier Général (GQG), at Chantilly. Its aim was to co-ordinate strategy after a disastrous year, during which, despite much expenditure of blood by the Allies, the tide of events seemed to be running strongly in favour of their enemy, the Central Powers (comprising Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria).

On the Western Front, a series of great Allied offensives in 1915 had ended in huge French casualties; the Second Battle of Artois in May and the Third Battle of Artois in September, together with the Second Battle of Champagne, had failed, resulting in the deaths of 335,000 Frenchmen. The British contributions to these offensives, at Aubers Ridge-Festubert and at Loos, had been equally fruitless. Their losses, however, were comparatively lighter, because the British army, being smaller, had committed far fewer troops than the French.

The German offensive at Ypres had driven back the French, thanks to the surprise created

by the first use of poison gas on the Western Front, thus obliging the British to abandon part of the Ypres salient. This turned an already unsatisfactory defensive position into an even worse one.

On the Eastern Front, the great Austro-German offensive at Gorlice-Tarnów had thrown the Russians back 300 miles and pushed them right out of Poland, to a line 180 miles east of Warsaw. After fighting four battles on the Isonzo, Italy had made little progress against Austria-Hungary, and by the end of 1915 had not yet declared war on Germany. Serbia, whose quarrel with Austria-Hungary had been the catalyst for war, had been overrun. A Franco-British expedition sent to help Serbia had arrived too late and was stranded in Greek territory at Salonika, while neutral Greece sat on the fence.

The Allied Gallipoli expedition had failed, and evacuations of the force were about to begin. A Turkish attack on the Suez Canal had been thrown back, but their troops held most of the Sinai, making them uncomfortably close to Britain's sea route to the east. On Egypt's western




General Joseph Jacques Césaire Joffre

The son of a Pyrenean barrel-maker, Joffre rose to high rank because of his sound republican credentials in a pre-war French army riven by politics. An imperturbable commander who never allowed even the worst news to interrupt his lunch hour, he saved France at the battle of the Marne in 1914 following the disastrous opening weeks of the war. He wielded far greater power than any British general, and as the war continued he exercised almost dictatorial control over the zone of the armies that extended far behind the Front.

British infantry in battle order moving up to the frontline on 28 June 1916





The Allied conference on 12 March 1916. Front row from left to right: General de Castelnau (Chief of Staff to Joffre), General Haig, General Wilemans (Belgium), General Gilinsky (Russia), General Joffre, General Porro (Italy) and Colonel Pechitch (Serbia)



General Sir Douglas Haig

Haig commanded I Corps in the 1914 BEF and First Army after the new command level of army was created. He became Commander in Chief of the BEF on 19 December 1915. An intelligent professional soldier with a questioning mind, he was, contrary to popular myth, an enthusiastic supporter of the tank, machine guns, aircraft, and indeed any idea or equipment that he thought would help win the war. He visited troops almost every day, and he took an interest in the views of even the most junior ranks.



A French *chasseur* (light infantry) battalion marching up to the frontline. Each company had its own flag



ABOVE: French Francs given to Allied troops on arrival in France



Field Marshal Earl Kitchener of Khartoum

Kitchener was Secretary of State for War from August 1914 until his death in June 1916. He met his end during the sinking of the cruiser HMS Hampshire while on a military mission to Russia. Kitchener predicted a long war and insisted on raising a mass volunteer army, with which he hoped to inflict a crushing defeat on the Germans in 1917. Instead, his army was committed on the Somme - a year before it was ready - in order to take pressure off the French army.

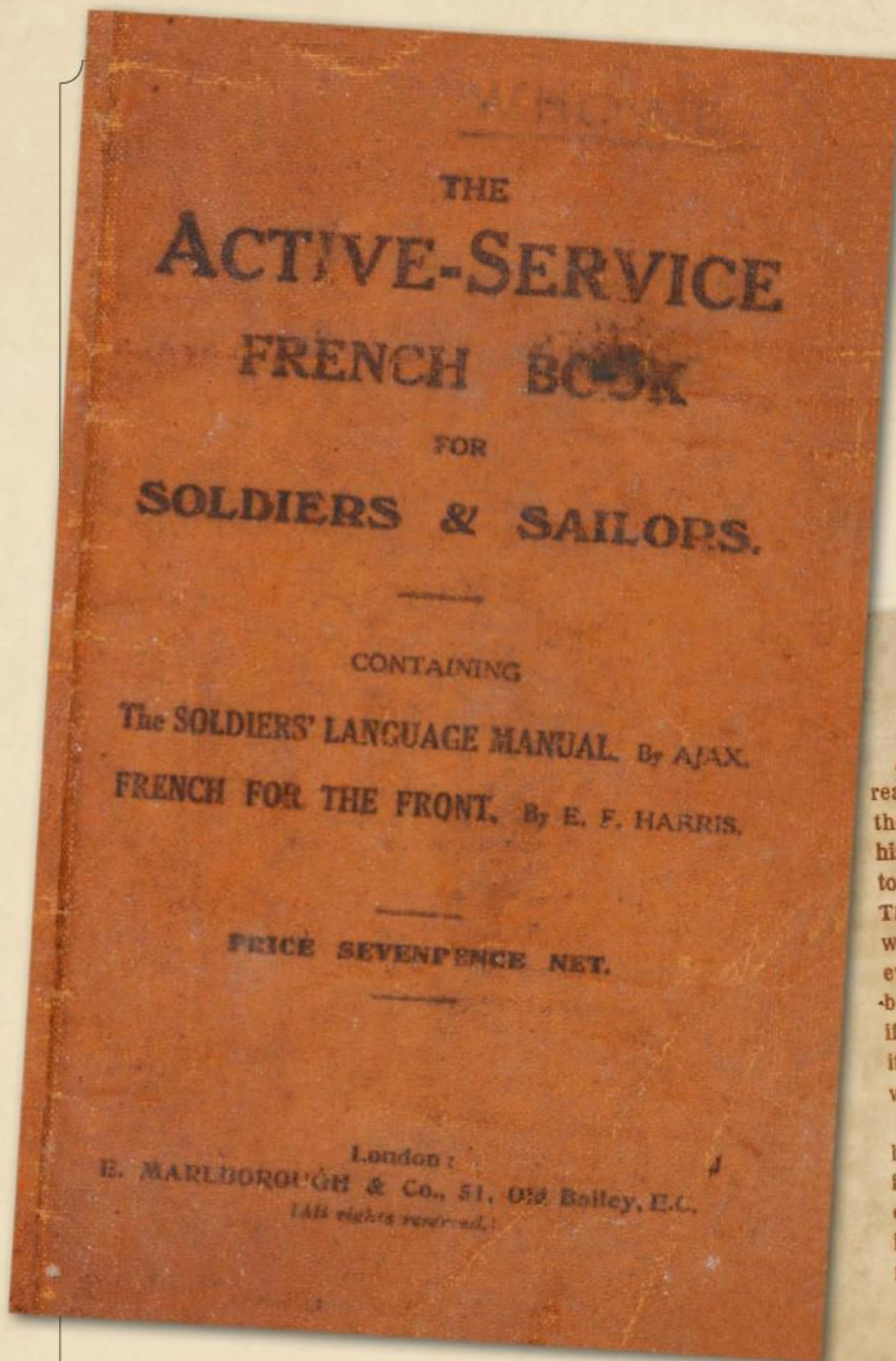
frontier with Libya, the Senussi tribes had become so threatening that a British force had to be sent to deal with them. In Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), General Townsend's advance on Baghdad failed and he was forced to withdraw to Kut, where he was besieged by the Turks. A British expeditionary force had been defeated at Tanga in East Africa and driven back to its ships, while the Germans had raided British East Africa (present-day Kenya), Nyasaland (now Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia), and the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo).

The outcome of the conference at Chantilly was an Allied agreement that in the principal theatres (the Western, Eastern and Italian Fronts), the British, French, Italians and Russians would attack on their respective fronts simultaneously and with maximum forces, as soon as they were ready and when

circumstances were favourable. In the secondary theatres (all the others), their efforts would be limited to containing the Central Powers.

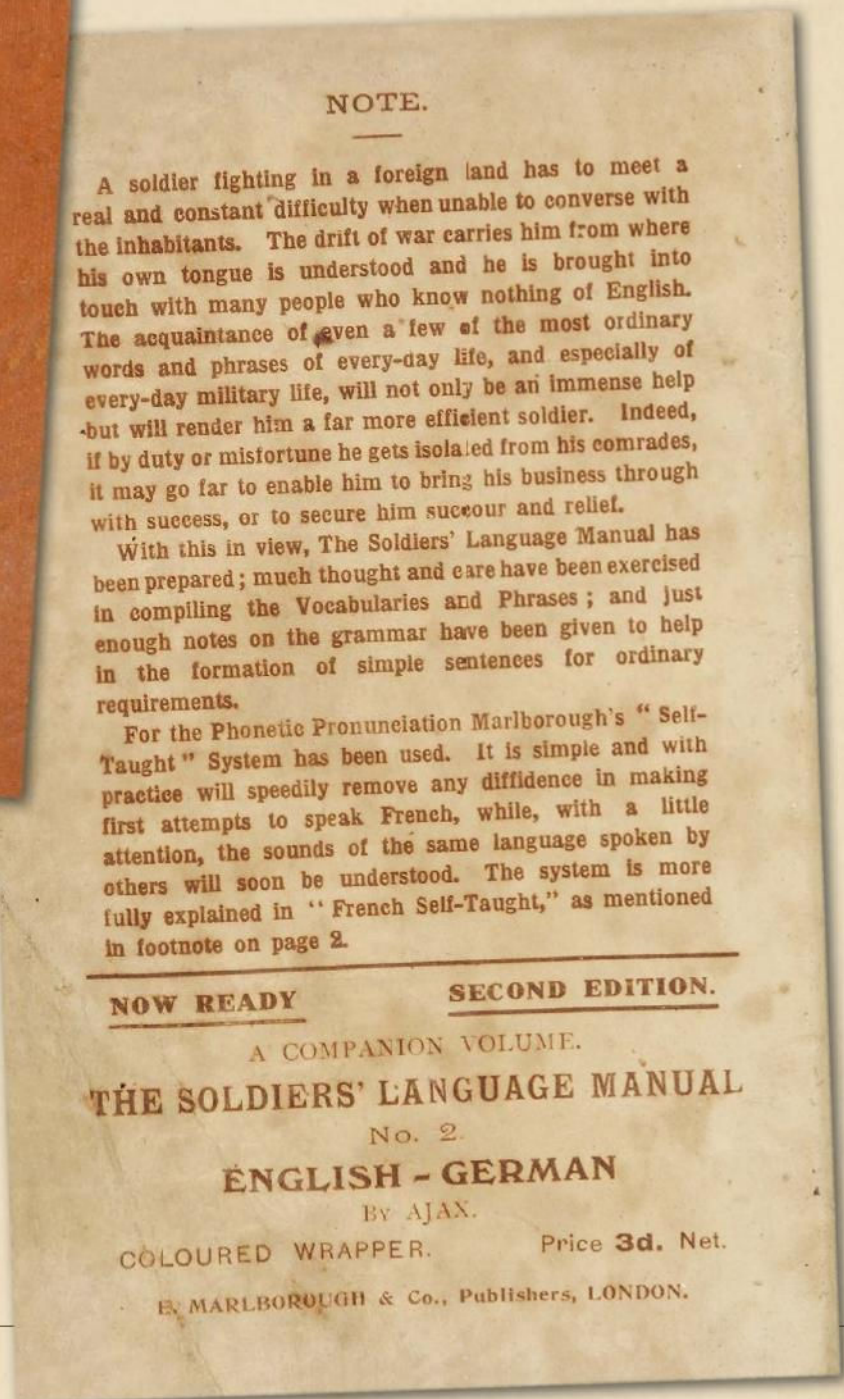
Joffre proposed that the main offensive on the Western Front be staged astride the River Somme. His reasons seemed to the British to have no strategic merit other than that they would be bound to take part in it, because by the end of 1915 the British Third Army's right flank rested on the Somme.

On 19 December, General Sir Douglas Haig took over command of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from Field Marshal Sir John French. Four days later, Lieutenant-General Sir William Robertson became Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) in London. Haig favoured an offensive in the Ypres-La Bassée area, which made much more strategic sense for Britain. As it turned out, both Joffre's and Haig's aspirations for 1916 were to be frustrated by the Germans.



ITEM 1

An English-French phrasebook used by soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force fighting in France.



L'ORAIISON DOMINICALE.

The Lord's Prayer.

Notre Père, qui (vous) êtes aux cieux :
Our Father, who (you) are in the heavens
Que votre nom soit sanctifié :
That Your Name be hallowed :
Que votre règne arrive : Que votre
That Your Kingdom come : That Your
volonté soit faite sur la terre comme
will be done on the earth as
au ciel : Donnez-nous aujourd'hui
in the heaven : Give us to-day
notre pain quotidien : Et
our bread of every day (daily) : And
pardonnez-nous nos offenses, comme
forgive us our trespasses, as
nous pardonnons à ceux qui nous ont
we forgive them who us have
offensés : Et ne nous laissez pas succom-
offended : And us leave not to give way
ber à la tentation ; mais délivrez-nous
to the temptation ; but deliver us
de mal. Amen.
from evil. Amen.

WHY VERDUN?

“To knock England’s best sword out of her hand”

The assault on Verdun was the only major offensive mounted by Germany on the Western Front between the end of the Second Battle of Ypres on 25 May 1915 and Operation Michael on 21 March 1918. By 1915, Germany held a substantial part of France and all but a strip of Belgian territory; useful bargaining counters in any future peace discussions. On the Eastern Front lay the best prospects for success; if the Germans could knock the Russians out first and throw everything into an attack in the West, then the French and British might decide they had had enough.

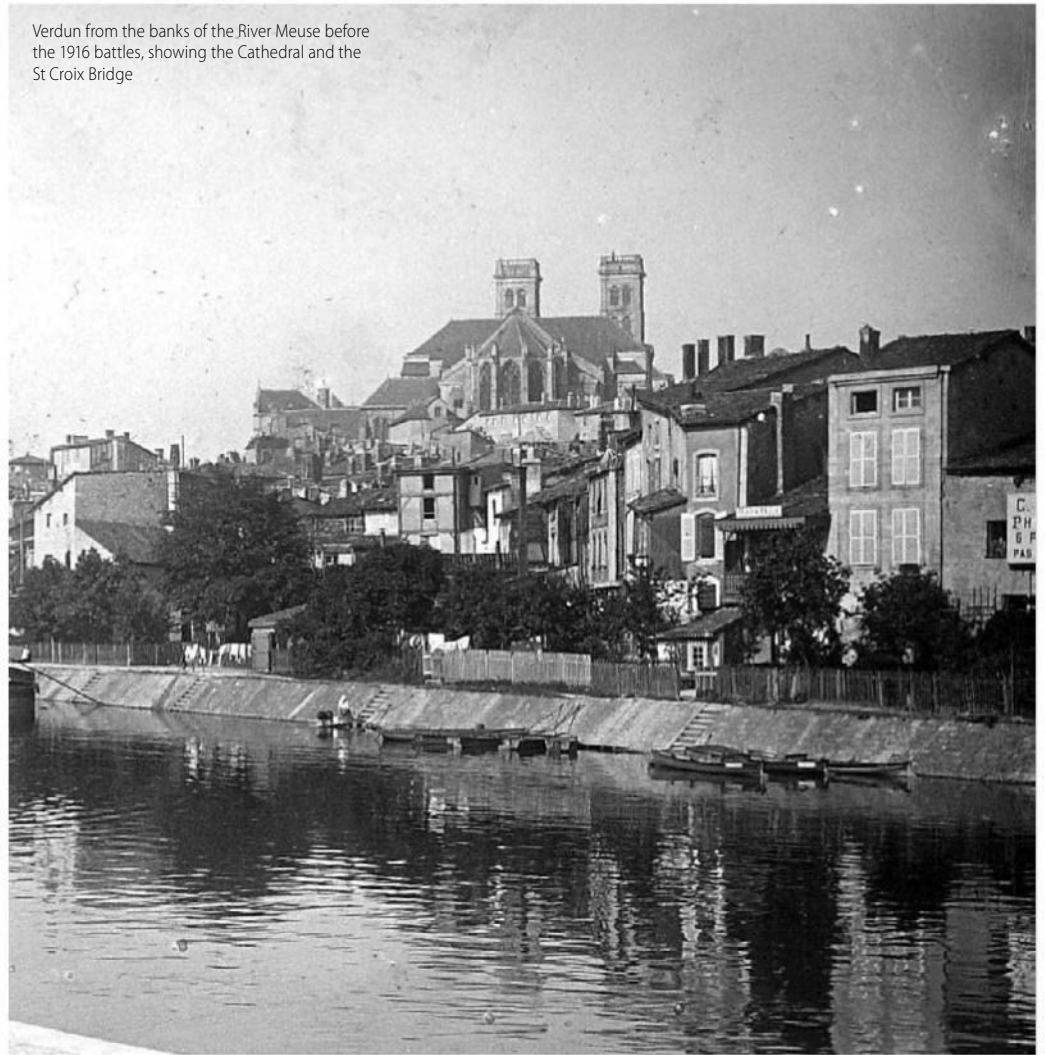
While the Allies planned, so did the Germans. In mid December 1915, General von Falkenhayn, the Chief of German General Staff, presented a memorandum to the Kaiser – the German emperor – which recommended a break with the hitherto successful strategy of containment in the West and offensives in the East. What was the reasoning behind this suggestion?

Falkenhayn saw Britain, or in his words, “England”, as the main enemy, unassailable in her island by direct assault. British sectors on the Western Front were to be avoided because the terrain would be muddy until late spring. In Falkenhayn’s opinion, there were two ways to attack Britain. The first was through unrestricted submarine warfare to starve the islanders into submission. This idea took some time to be accepted, and its eventual adoption in February 1917 would draw the USA into the war. The second was “to knock England’s best sword out of her hand”. England’s best sword was France.

Falkenhayn believed this should be done quickly before the Allies mounted another offensive; before an ever-expanding British Army became really formidable; and before Germany, worn out by war and blockade, began to lose heart. The fulfilment of this last condition was a long way off, but the underlying fear was present in Falkenhayn’s mind.

But where should the offensive be? Falkenhayn considered Belfort and Verdun, but settled for the latter because the railway system made an attack there easier to supply and support. Falkenhayn

Verdun from the banks of the River Meuse before the 1916 battles, showing the Cathedral and the St Croix Bridge



BELOW: First World War Bavarian soldier's belt buckle inscribed "Fearless and True"



RIGHT: First World War German uniform shoulder strap of the 21st Field Artillery Regiment



did not promise his imperial master that the battle would result in a breakthrough, which had been the ultimate aim of fruitless British and French battering for the past year. Even the capture of Verdun itself was not uppermost in his calculations. He was offering a win-win strategy. He forecast that the French would defend Verdun

to the last gasp. In doing so they could be bled white. If the city fell, it would be an immense blow to French morale, coming after 1915, a period that they themselves dubbed *l'Année Stérile* ("the barren year"). This could be achieved, so Falkenhayn told the Kaiser, at relatively low cost to the German army.

The wily Falkenhayn, more courtier than soldier, had calculated that two elements in this plan would appeal to the Kaiser. By depicting "England" as the arch-enemy, he was playing on his sovereign's anglophobia, whereas France was still the leading partner on the Allied side. Verdun, moreover, lay in the German Fifth Army's sector, commanded by the Kaiser's son, Crown Prince Wilhelm, although the prince's Chief of Staff General Schmidt von Knobelsdorf made all the serious decisions.

On 27 January 1916, the plan was issued; Operation *Gericht*, meaning "judgement" or "tribunal" was to start on 12 February.

Meanwhile, German formations assembled for the attack. During discussions between Falkenhayn and Fifth Army, two areas of potential friction emerged.

First: the Crown Prince wanted to attack simultaneously on both banks of the River Meuse, which made tactical sense. He was told that he would be given only enough troops for an offensive on one bank – the French right, or eastern, bank.

Second: the Crown Prince's orders to his army gave the objective as the capture of Verdun. This differed from Falkenhayn's directive specifying an offensive in the Meuse area in the direction of Verdun. Falkenhayn was not at all sure he wanted the fortress town to fall; if it did, the French might then pull back, frustrating his plan to lure them into the meat-grinder. But in his devious fashion, Falkenhayn did not challenge the Crown Prince's order; the troops would fight better if they felt it was for a prestigious prize such as Verdun.



Crown Prince Wilhelm

Commander of the German Fifth Army, Crown Prince Wilhelm was parodied in the British press as "Little Willie", though he was actually more intelligent and a better soldier than his somewhat unprepossessing appearance conveyed. As the price for allowing his son a field command, the Kaiser insisted that he follow the advice of his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Schmidt von Knobelsdorf, a confidant of Falkenhayn. It is possible that had the Crown Prince been able to dispense with Knobelsdorf's services sooner, as he ultimately did, the Germans might have won at Verdun.



French infantry in a frontline dugout



French infantry in helmets and "horizon blue", which replaced the blue coat and red trousers in 1915. Colours were taken into the field, but not into battle



German infantry being moved by truck. At this stage in the war, they still wore the "pickelhaube" helmet, covered with a cloth, on the frontline



General Erich von Falkenhayn

Falkenhayn first came to the Kaiser's notice in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion in China. He succeeded Moltke in September 1914 as Chief of Staff of the Imperial German Army. His strategy in 1916 to "bleed France white" at Verdun had almost the same effect on Germany. Relieved of his post in August 1916, he had defeated Romania in a brilliant campaign by the end of 1916, and then served in Palestine in 1917 and Russia in 1918.

OPERATION GERICHT

“Judgement”

MON 21 FEB – THUR 24 FEB

The German offensive was scheduled to start on 12 February, but snowstorms imposed repeated delays, possibly saving Verdun, and even France. Verdun, with its string of mutually supporting fortresses possessing inter-locking zones of defensive fire, was seen by the French as impregnable. Since October 1914, the area had been the quietest sector of the Western Front, so parts of the French garrison, along with 43 heavy guns and 11 field batteries had been redeployed elsewhere, despite half-hearted protests coming from General Herr, the regional commander.

Lieutenant Colonel Émile Driant, nearly 61, and commander of two battalions of *chasseurs à pied* (light infantry) of the 72nd Division at the Bois des Caures, was not so restrained. His letter to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, castigating the state of Verdun’s defences,





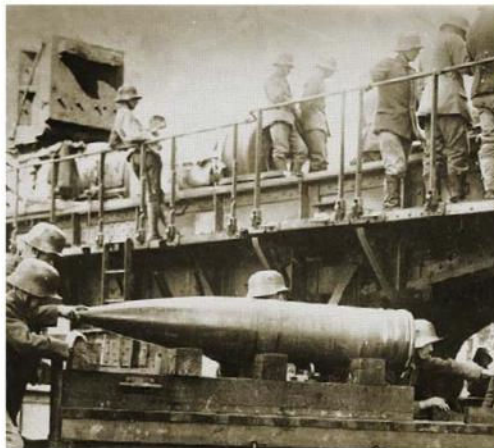
Lieutenant Colonel Émile Driant

Driant retired from the army in 1905, having jeopardised his career by marrying the daughter of General Boulanger, an erratic war minister, and by speaking out against the anti-clerical tendency in the French army. He was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1910, and as "Capitaine Danrit", wrote anti-British books. Recalled in 1914, Driant commanded two *chasseur* battalions at Verdun, and made speeches in Parliament and wrote letters condemning lack of preparations there. His heroic death at Verdun probably saved him from being court-martialled.

eventually found its way via General Galliéni (the Minister of War) to Joffre, who contemptuously berated Driant for his impertinence.

He did, however, order that reinforcements be sent to Verdun. It was too late; German preparations had been so carefully hidden that there was little sense of urgency at GQG.

In underground galleries, called *Stollen*, the German soldiers waited for the orders to attack. At dawn on 21 February, a German 380mm shell exploded with a mighty roar in the courtyard of the Bishop's Palace at Verdun, followed by a swelling crescendo as more than 1,220 guns and mortars over a front of eight miles joined in the bombardment. In the Bois des Caures 210mm shells chopped down the trees and pulverised the trunks into whirling splinters. At midday there was a pause. The defenders emerged, which is



ABOVE: A German 380mm "Long Max", a naval gun on a land mounting on a steel girder. Its range was 46,000 yards



French infantry await the German attack in one of the woods at Verdun

just what the Germans had been waiting for, enabling them to pick out sections of the defences that had survived so far. These were then drenched with heavy mortar fire, while the 210mm howitzers shifted onto targets further back, overwhelming the French artillery.

At 4pm, the German infantry, having unscrewed the spikes from their helmets (to avoid them becoming entangled in the thick undergrowth), erupted from the *Stollen* to hit the French 72nd and 51st Infantry Divisions. In the Bois des Caures, Driant had laid out his defences in three lines of strongpoints, rather than a continuous line of trenches. So, despite terrible casualties, including the loss of two complete platoons in strongpoints that had been blown apart, as the bombardment lifted, about a fifth of Driant's *chasseurs* still manned what was left of their positions. The fighting that ensued with grenades and bayonets was savage. Led by officers like the gallant 23-year-old Lieutenant Robin, the *chasseurs* contested every yard of ground, many of them until death. To their right in the Bois d'Herbebois, a German flame-thrower attack set fire to the men of the 51st Division, who, screaming in agony, withdrew in disorder.



ABOVE: A German 105mm field artillery piece joins in the bombardment at Verdun on the morning of 21 February 1916

The Germans, too, had suffered an unpleasant shock. Thanks to Driant's stubborn defence, the main body of XVIII Corps had made little progress on the Bois des Caures. Only on the French left had VII Reserve Corps managed to seize the whole of the Bois d'Haumont, levering open a gap in the French defence. But Driant knew this was only the beginning.

Dawn found the French preparing to counter-attack in order to retrieve lost ground. The Germans brought up their flame-throwers, and the whole weight of XVIII Corps advanced on Driant's position and burnt out the defenders before closing to finish them off. Eventually a mere 80 *chasseurs* were left at Driant's headquarters, holding the position grouped round their commanding officer (CO), who, rifle in hand, said "You know very well they've never hit me yet." Finally, as he was coolly organising a fighting breakout, he fell, shot through the head.

The fall of the Bois des Caures and other forward positions was an overture to three days of ferocious fighting that would follow. By the evening of 24 February there were no French reserves left. Unknown to the Germans, the way to Verdun was open.



ABOVE: A box of ten German green signal flares

GRAND QUARTIER GENERAL
des
ARMEES DE L'EST.

Etat-Major
3 Bureau.

432. 39a
Au G.Q.G., le 22 Fevrier 1916.

LE GENERAL COMMANDANT EN CHEF
au General Sir W. ROBERTSON,
Chef d'Etat-Major Imperial

a LONDRES.

Mon Cher Général,

Il resulte de nombreux renseignements déjà confirmés en partie par des faits, que les Allemands preparent sur le front occidental, une offensive a laquelle ils appliqueront des moyens considerables.

Tous les indices recueillis jusqu'à present me font croire que l'attaque portera sur la partie du front tenue par les Armees francaises dont nos adversaires connaissent la faible densité relative et dont ils savent que les ressources en hommes sont très limitées.

Il est certain d'ailleurs que la région des Flandres et du Nord de la France ne se pretent pas, en cette saison, au developpement d'une offensive à grande envergure, et que la faiblesse des effectifs ennemis devant le front de la III Armée britannique permet d'exclure l'hypothèse d'une attaque allemande dans cette région.

C'est donc peut-être un effort décisif que l'ennemi va tenter incessamment dans le but de mettre hors de cause les Armées francaises, alors que ni les Russes, ni les Italiens ne sont en état d'intervenir utilement, et que les forces britanniques n'ont pas, elles-mêmes, atteint leur maximum de developpement.

Si nous voulons exploiter a notre profit, la crise provoquée par une offensive générale de l'ennemi, il est indispensable:

1 /.....

ITEM 2

A letter from Joffre to General Robertson, sent the day after the opening of Operation Gericht, and requesting help to resist the German offensive.

TRANSLATION: PAGE 1 (OPPOSITE)

My dear General,

Numerous items of intelligence, already partially confirmed by the facts, would indicate that the Germans are preparing an offensive on the Western Front to which they will apply considerable resources.

All the indications amassed hitherto lead me to believe that the attack will occur at that part of the front which is held by the French Armies, whose relatively weak density is known to our opponents who are also aware that our manpower resources are very limited.

It is certain, furthermore, that the Flanders region and northern France are not favourable at this time of year to the development of a major offensive and that the weakness of the enemy forces at the British Third Army front excludes the possibility of a German attack in that region.

The enemy may, perhaps, attempt a decisive thrust with the aim of putting the French Armies out of action, at a time when neither the Russians nor the Italians are capable of intervening usefully, and the British forces have themselves not attained their maximum development.

If we want to exploit to our advantage the crisis caused due to a general offensive by the enemy, it is vital that:

TRANSLATION: PAGE 2 (SEE OVERLEAF)

1/- we stop the German thrust,

2/- we move at the right time to a counter-offensive so powerful that the enemy forces cannot rally after their defeat.

This aim can only be achieved if I have reserves that are at least equivalent to those that the enemy will engage in battle and furthermore, if the British Armies are capable of undertaking a significant attack at the same time that the French counter-offensive is developed.

In the event of such a decisive crisis, I request General Sir DOUGLAS HAIG to lend us the assistance of the Armies under his command:

1/- by permitting us to devote the largest number of forces possible to the battle which, in all probability, will develop on the British Army front in any case.

2/- by holding himself ready to take the offensive himself with as much vigour as possible.

To this end:

a) - he will have to relieve the Tenth Army or at least a large number of its forces as quickly as possible,

b) - he will have to spread out his reserves in such a way as to enable me to withdraw all the French reserves available in the Northern Region and behind the Sixth Army, without my having to have second thoughts about it,

c) - he will quickly arrange for earthworks to be dug in the terrain planned for his attack in the northern part of the Somme.

I would be grateful if you would support these requests to the Commander of the British Forces in France. If they are met, the Armies under his command will lend us valuable assistance proportionate to their numbers that are constantly being reinforced. It will not have escaped your notice, of course, that the more numerous the British units in France, the quicker we shall achieve Victory.

TRANSLATION: PAGE 3 (SEE OVERLEAF)

In this same vein, you have yourself often insisted on the need to concentrate the maximum number of forces in France.

I would therefore ask you to hasten as far as possible the transport of the Divisions from Egypt to the western front where the decisive round of the game will be enacted.

It would appear, furthermore, that the situation in the East, after the most recent Russian successes, is such that the British government need have no further fear for Egypt and whatever the progress of events in France, the entry into battle of several fresh units on the western front can only produce happy results.

I wanted to give you my opinion on the current situation in France and the eventualities that will present themselves because events may speed up. It is consequently vital to make our-selves capable of dealing with them immediately and to benefit as greatly as possible from the defeat that we must inflict on our adversary.

I am counting on the absolute co-operation of the British troops to this end and especially on your personal collaboration in putting into action all of the forces at your disposal.

Please accept my most cordial sentiments, dear General,
(sgd.) J. Joffre

433.

1 /- que nous enrayions l'effort des Allemands,

2 /- que nous passions, en temps voulu, à une contre-offensive si puissante que les forces ennemies ne puissent se rallier après leur échec.

Ce but ne pourra être atteint que si je dispose de réserves au moins équivalentes à celles que l'ennemi engagera dans la bataille, et d'autre part, si les Armées anglaises sont en mesure d'entreprendre une attaque sérieuse en même temps que se développera la contre-offensive française.

Dans l'éventualité de cette crise décisive, je demande donc au General Sir DOUGLAS HAIG de nous prêter le concours des Armées sous ses ordres:

1 /- en nous permettant de consacrer le plus de forces possible à la bataille, qui, selon toute probabilité, se développera ailleurs que sur le front des Armées britanniques,

2 /- en se tenant prêt à prendre lui-même l'offensive avec toute la vigueur possible.

Il faut à cet effet:

a)-qu'il fasse relever, dans le plus bref délai, la X^e Armée, ou tout au moins la plus grande partie de ses forces,

b)- qu'il échelonne ses réserves de manière à me permettre de retirer, sans arrière-pensée, toutes les réserves françaises disponibles dans la région du Nord et en arrière de la VI^e Armée,

c)- qu'il fasse hâter l'aménagement du terrain prévu pour son attaque au Nord de la Somme.

Je vous serai reconnaissant de vouloir bien appuyer ces demandes auprès du Commandant en Chef des Forces Britanniques en France: en leur donnant satisfaction, les Armées sous ses ordres nous prêteront un concours précieux et proportionnel à leurs effectifs qui se renforcent sans cesse.

Il.....

434.

Il ne saurait d'ailleurs vous échapper que plus les unités britanniques en France seront nombreuses, plus nous obtiendrons rapidement la Victoire.

Dans cet ordre d'idées, vous avez vous-même souvent insisté sur la nécessité de concentrer en France le maximum de forces.

Je vous demande donc de hâter autant que possible le transport des Divisions d'Egypte sur le front occidental ou doit se jouer la partie décisive.

Il semble, d'ailleurs, que la situation en Orient, après les derniers succès russes, soit telle que le Gouvernement Britannique ne doive plus avoir aucune crainte pour l'Egypte, et quelle que puisse être la marche des événements en France, l'entrée en ligne de plusieurs unités fraîches, sur le front occidental ne peut avoir que des résultats heureux.

J'ai tenu à vous exposer mon opinion sur la situation actuelle en France et sur les éventualités qui se présentent; car les événements peuvent se précipiter. Il est, par conséquent indispensable de nous mettre immédiatement en mesure d'y faire face et de profiter dans la plus large mesure de l'échec que nous devons infliger à notre adversaire.

Je compte sur le concours absolu des troupes britanniques à cet effet et tout particulièrement sur votre collaboration personnelle pour la mise en œuvre de toutes les forces dont vous disposez.

Agreez, mon Cher General, l'expression de mes sentiments très cordiaux.

(Sgd.) J. Joffre.

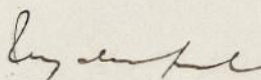
ITEM 3

General Robertson's 24 February reply to Joffre, explaining the measures taken to help the French who were under attack at Verdun.

O 1/10/39.

London, S.W.

24th February, 1916.



With reference to your letter No: 5.319 of the 22nd February, I have already represented to Sir Douglas Haig the importance of giving you every possible assistance in the present crisis, but you will, I am sure, agree with me that the form, which such assistance can best take, is a matter which can only be settled ^{between} you and him.

I have today heard from Sir Douglas Haig that he is preparing to relieve immediately three more divisions of the Xth Army and I am informed that he has sent a staff officer to your Head Quarters to arrange for the disposition of his reserves, so as to permit you, in case of necessity, to draw troops from your 6th Army. These points ^{are} I hope already arranged to your satisfaction.

With regard to the movement of troops from Egypt, orders have already been issued for the move of one division to France to begin next week. It is still too early to say definitely that no attack can be made upon Egypt but I hope that this division will be shortly followed by others as the situation permits. Another division leaves England for France next week.

As you know I have always been of opinion that for us the western front is the main theatre of operations and I have used every possible effort to assemble there the greatest possible force. It is for this reason that I have maintained, and still maintain, that our ten divisions now at Salonika are not employed

M. le General Joffre.

2nd sheet.

to the best advantage there, and I trust that you will support me in advocating the withdrawal to France of at least a part of that force.

I agree, generally, with the views you express in your letter in regard to the situation, and you may depend upon me giving you every support that I can. It seems to me that we can desire nothing better than that the enemy should continue his attacks, as they will use up his troops to a much greater extent than the operations of "usure" which you had proposed that we should employ against him. I am strongly of opinion that, by attacking, the enemy is playing our game. This is the first time he has attempted to attack us in force since our lines have been as strong as they now are and our reserves have been so plentiful, and it only remains for us to use every man and gun against him that we can, and fight stubbornly with full confidence of winning a great success. I am sure that we can gain such a success if only we stand firm, and remember the ^{present} ~~past~~ difficulties of the enemy. He is no doubt attempting to gain such a victory as will enhance his position in the eyes of his own people, and if we not only deprive him of it but administer a defeat - as we can - his position may be shaken to such an extent that he will not be able to recover from his failure.

John
W. M. M.



Fort Douaumont showing damage from mortar bombs in January 1916.





GERMAN BREAKTHROUGH

“Hold fast. I have confidence in you”

FRI 25 FEB – SAT 04 MAR

The largest and most prestigious of the forts at Verdun took its name from the nearby village of Douaumont. By its completion in 1913, the defensive strategy behind the fort's design in 1885 had been overtaken by the doctrine of *l'attaque à outrance* (“all-out attack”). In August 1914, its garrison was cut from six officers and 417 soldiers to just one warrant officer, 56 territorial artillery-men and a sapper. Its armament comprised three machine guns, two 75mm guns, and a 155mm piece.

On 25 February, the tiny garrison manned the 155mm gun, but the observation positions and the 75mm guns went unmanned, as German shells rained down on the fort, albeit causing little damage thanks to the layer of sand between those of the concrete. Orders to reinforce the fort, issued the day before, were ignored thanks to an error by the staff.

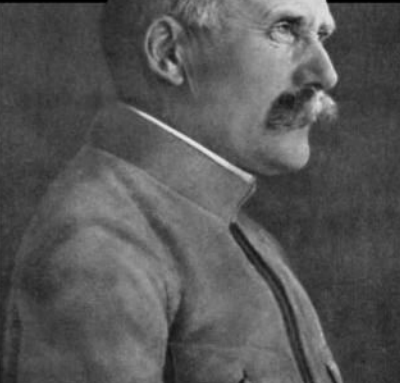
The 24th Brandenburg Regiment's objectives in the German III Corps' assault plan for 25 February did not include Fort Douaumont. But because positions astride the Brandenburgs' axis had been abandoned, the regiment was able to advance over three-quarters of a mile in half an hour. On its extreme left, a section of nine pioneers of the 2nd Battalion commanded by Sergeant Kunze suddenly found itself confronted by the massive bulk of Fort Douaumont. Fired up by their success and unnoticed by the garrison, they weaved their way through barbed wire cut by shellfire and descended into the moat. Here they found a steel door into the fort that was firmly locked, but 12 feet above Kunze's head a small cannon protruded from an embrasure. Ordering his men to form a human pyramid, he climbed up, squeezed into the embrasure and, after some effort, opened the steel door to let his



ABOVE: First Aid for the wounded at Verdun during the early days of the battle

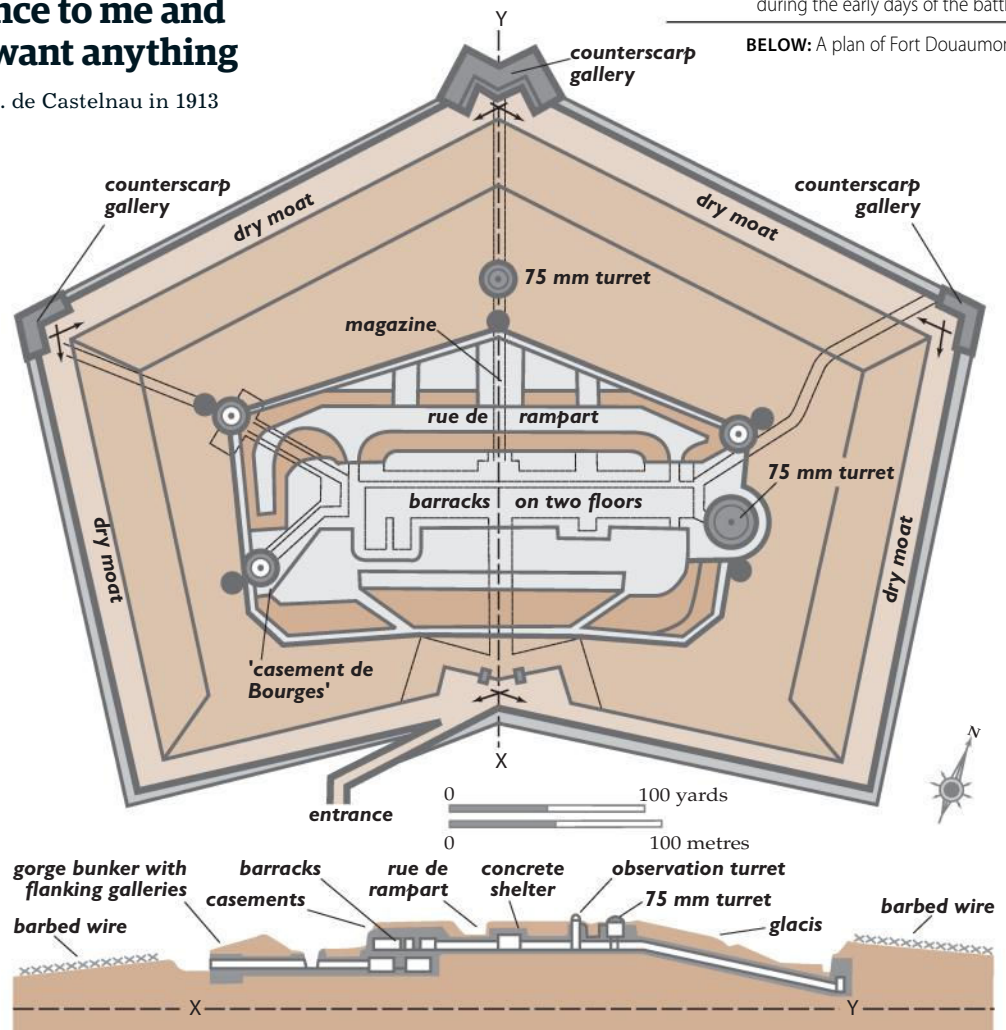
“The fortified places are a nuisance to me and they take away my men. I don't want anything to do with them” - Major General N.M.J.E. de Castelnau in 1913

BELOW: A plan of Fort Douaumont



General Henri Philippe Pétain

Pétain was the son of a peasant from the Pas de Calais and in 1914 was a passed-over infantry colonel. Two years later he became the saviour of Verdun and France. Despite his outwardly cold demeanor, he was a very successful ladies' man. He spoke plainly to his soldiers and was in turn trusted by them. An anglophobe, he did not trouble to conceal his loathing of politicians. French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau judged Pétain to be defeatist. In 1940, he would be proved right.



RIGHT: The Shoulder strap of the 24th Brandenburg Regiment, whose men captured Fort Douaumont

BELOW: A portable battlefield syringe and ampoule kit, including morphine and cocaine



Lieutenant Brandis

Brandis, along with Lieutenant Radtke and Captain Haupt, succeeded in penetrating Fort Douaumont with separate parties of troops. Sergeant Kunze supposedly preceded them, but while the latter was allegedly eating lunch in an abandoned French mess, Brandis was first to emerge with the good news. He and Captain Haupt earned Germany's highest decoration, Pour le Mérite. Radtke was awarded the Iron Cross, while Kunze, having come forward years later to claim a share in the glory of Douaumont's capture, was promoted from police constable to inspector. Subsequently there were bitter disputes over who got into the fort first.

men in. Totally surprised by being attacked from within the fort, some of the gun-crews surrendered to Kunze's men.

Next to arrive was Lieutenant Radtke and his platoon, followed by Captain Haupt and some of his company, and they were later joined by Lieutenant Brandis with some of his unit. About 90 Germans captured the fort without a single shot being fired. While the Germans sensed victory, mass panic swept through Verdun. General de Bonneval ordered his 37th African Division to pull back to Belleville ridge, overlooking Verdun itself.

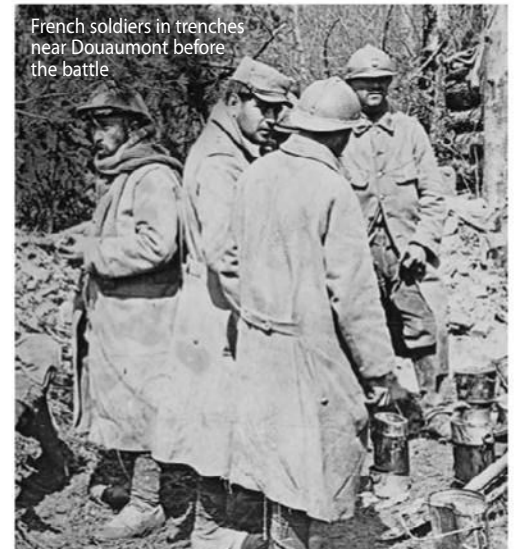
The previous day, General de Castelnau, Joffre's fiery chief of staff, had visited Verdun to assess the situation, having already recommended to Joffre that General Philippe Pétain's Second Army should move to the left bank. De Castelnau, who had already lost three of his sons in the service of France, would not countenance abandoning the right bank, a move that would make both tactical and strategic sense. No: he had seen retreat become rout in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Pétain would take over both banks.

Meanwhile, Pétain was entertaining a lady at the Hôtel Terminus of the Gare du Nord in Paris. Woken by his aide-de-camp, he announced that he would set out the following morning. Beyond Bar-le-Duc, icy roads, snowdrifts and chaos slowed his journey to Verdun. Reinforcements



and transport struggled against a tide of retreating soldiers and civilians, guns and wagons. Learning that Douaumont had fallen, Pétain set up his headquarters at Souilly, approximately 15 miles south of Verdun. He issued orders that there would be no retreat. By now in the grip of pneumonia and shuddering with fever, Pétain directed the battle raging on the right bank, which was now centred on the village of Douaumont.

For the first time in the battle, the French artillery was properly co-ordinated. But this did not save Pétain's old regiment, the 33rd, from destruction in Douaumont village. The regiment included a young Captain Charles de Gaulle, who was badly wounded and taken prisoner. Pétain forbade a counter-attack. From now on the battle would be fought differently – his way.



ITEM 4

Letter from French Minister of War, Gallieni, sent to Joffre 2 March, praising the army's efforts to blunt the German attack.

To the GENERAL CHIEF OF STAFF

The enemy, during the course of a furious attack with repeated assaults lasting all of eight days, has just tried to break through our lines at Verdun: the efforts of its bayonets, backed up by a massive artillery battle, were broken by the unbeatable heroism of our soldiers and their Leaders.

The enemy may renew its attempt: France, re-assured and confident, knows that the rampart that the Army has set against it will not be overturned.

The Government of the Republic charges you with expressing its admiration to the troops and its faith in their valour.

Long live France! Long live the Republic.

Gallieni

MINISTÈRE
DE LA GUERRE.

Cabinet
Du Ministre.

21^e 1288 D

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE.

Paris, le 2 Mars 1916

LE MINISTRE DE LA GUERRE

à Monsieur Le GENERAL COMMANDANT EN CHEF.

L'ennemi, au cours d'une attaque furieuse, par des assauts répétés huit jours durant, vient de tenter de rompre nos lignes devant Verdun: l'effort de ses baïonnettes appuyées par une action d'artillerie formidable, s'est brisé devant l'indomptable héroïsme de nos soldats et de leurs Chefs.

L'ennemi peut renouveler sa tentative: la France rassurée et confiante sait que le rempart que l'Armée lui opposera ne sera pas renversé.

Le Gouvernement de la République vous charge d'exprimer aux troupes son admiration et sa foi en leur vaillance.

Vive la France ! Vive la République!



Gallieni

ITEM 5

General Order 57 from Joffre to his soldiers at Verdun praising their heroism.

Soldiers of the army of VERDUN!

For the last three weeks you have been experiencing the most terrible assaults that the enemy has ever attempted against us.

Germany was counting on the success of the effort that it believed to be irresistible and to which it dedicated its best troops and most powerful artillery.

It hoped that the capture of Verdun would reinforce the courage of its allies and would convinced the neutral countries of German superiority.

They didn't count on you!

Night and day, despite unprecedented heavy fire, you resisted all the attacks and maintained your positions.

The battle is not yet over, because the Germans need a victory. You will know how to snatch it from them.

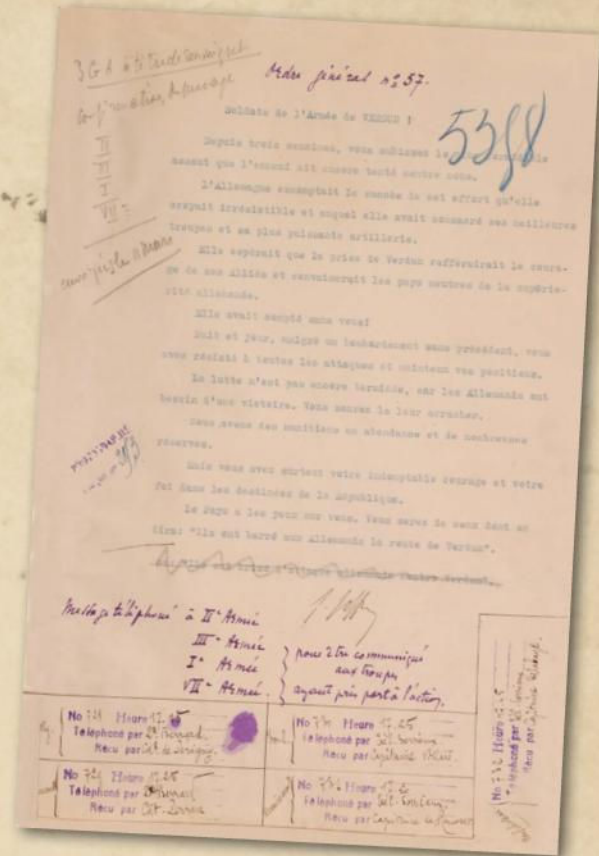
We have abundant munitions and numerous reserves.

But, above all, you have your indomitable courage and your faith in the destiny of the Republic!

The country has its eyes on you. You are among of those of whom it will be said: "It was they who barred the Germans' way to Verdun".

Message telephoned to the Second Army, Third Army, First Army, Seventh Army.

May be communicated to the troops who took part in the action.



ITEM 6

Joffre's 27 February telegram to Pétain advising the best strategy.

Gen. Pétain Souilly

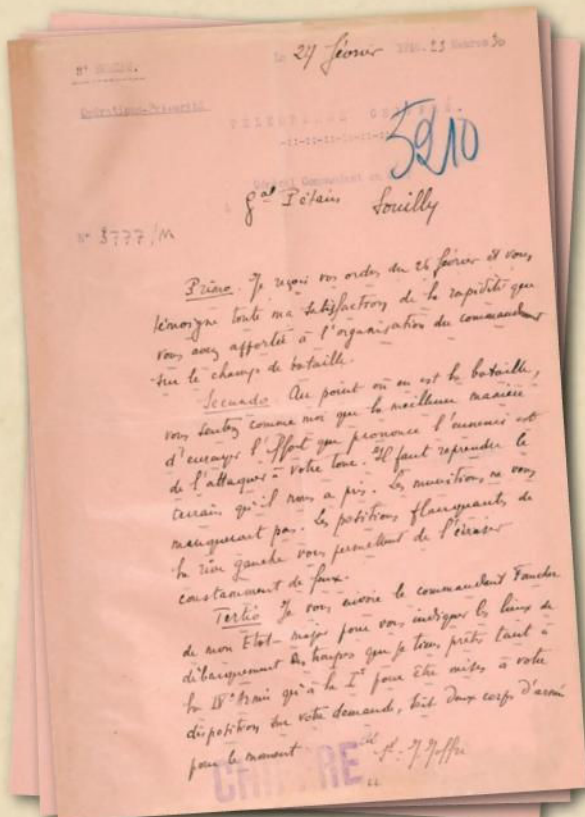
Firstly. I have received your orders of 26 February and bear witness to my complete satisfaction as to the speed with which you organised the command in the battlefield.

Secondly. At the point where the battle is currently, you feel, as I do, that the best way to curb the efforts of the enemy is for us to attack

it in turn. We need to recapture the territory they took from us. You are not short of munitions. The flanking positions on the left bank enable you to constantly crush them with your fire.

Thirdly. I am sending you Commander Faucher from my headquarters to indicate the places at which the troops should disembark, troops whom I am holding ready both for the IVth Army and for the Ist to be available to you on demand, making two army corps for the moment.

Gen. J. Joffre



FRENCH ARTILLERY

“Firepower Kills”

At the start of the battle of Verdun the German artillery outclassed that of the French. This was not just because so many guns had been stripped from the forts, and field artillery redeployed away from Verdun. The French inferiority in artillery was grounded in the tactical doctrine preached by Colonel de Grandmaison, chief of the Operations Bureau of the General Staff, well before 1914. The secret of success, held by de Grandmaison, was to attack whatever the cost; every centimetre of ground must be held to the death, and, if lost, regained by an immediate counter-attack, however ill advised.

Heavy artillery was regarded as an unwelcome impediment. “You talk to us of heavy artillery. Thank God we have none. The strength of the French army is in the lightness of its guns,” said a general in 1909. The French army had a superb, light, quick-firing 75mm gun that was designed to accompany and support infantry during attack. With its flat trajectory, the gun was most effective when firing in a direct line of sight at massed enemy troops in the open. It was fortunate for

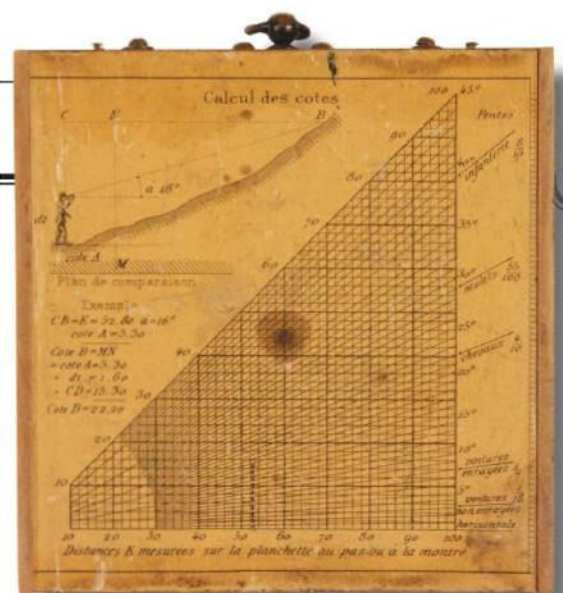
A French 75mm gun battery firing. It wasn't high enough to reach targets in dead ground



RIGHT: The underside of the artillery officer's magnetic compass, with instructions on how to calculate the height of hills by using the table



ABOVE: A French artillery officer's magnetic compass. To take a bearing, the observer lined up the object through the slit in the rod and mirror



ABOVE: French First World War binoculars – essential artillery officer's equipment

BELOW: The French Schneider-Creusot 400mm railway gun, two of which helped turn the tide at Verdun. From late 1914, the French started to put fortress and coastal guns on railway trucks. These were soon followed by purpose-designed railway guns.





BELOW: One of the French Schneider-Creusot 400mm railway guns

BELOW: A French trench mortar crew. The man bottom-right is about to load a bomb in the breech of the mortar



France that throughout most of 1914 – and until they learned better – this was exactly how the Germans attacked.

The gun's light shell was less effective against well-spread-out infantry, and almost useless against troops in the shallowest trenches. Its barrel could not be elevated at a very high angle, so it was a poor weapon for firing over cover against troops on reverse slopes. If sited on a forward slope in the direct fire role for which it was designed and where it could perform best, it could be easily located and destroyed by artillery, and even by machine guns.

In 1914, the French army possessed only 300 heavy guns of inferior and obsolete design, while the Germans had 3,500. At Verdun the Germans deployed four times as many guns as the French, and of better quality.

However, it was not only in quality and quantity that the German artillery was superior to the French. Artillery is only truly effective if controlled properly to bring down a heavy, concentrated weight of fire to maximum effect. Pétain, although not an artilleryman, believed in the benefits of fire-power. Before the war, as an instructor at the École supérieure de guerre (the French Staff College), he had been a lone voice teaching that, contrary to the tactical nonsense of the de Grandmaison school, "firepower kills".

From the moment of his arrival at Verdun, Pétain took a personal interest in the artillery. His formation commanders were required to tell him



A French 155mm gun firing at night. Being an old design without a recoil and recuperator system, each time it fired, it ran back and had to be re-laid before firing again



A French 305mm gun being loaded

at the morning briefings exactly what their artillery had been doing over the previous 24 hours. Pétain, as an infantryman from his experience earlier in the war, knew what it was like to feel a lack of support from his gunners while being pounded by enemy guns with apparent impunity. He insisted that in future the infantry would not be denied support, and, furthermore, that the artillery would be used offensively to wear down the enemy, rather than sending infantry to do the job. Pétain is credited with the expression “Artillery conquers a position and infantry occupies it.”

As the battle progressed, French artillery came to be used to maximum effect for the first time in the war and German positions on the right bank of the Meuse came under heavy harassing fire from French guns well sited behind ridges on the left bank opposite.

Pétain’s eventual successor, Nivelle, who was a gunner, took co-ordination a step further. He is credited with introducing into the French army the “creeping barrage” in support of advancing infantry. A “creeping barrage” moved at a pre-planned rate of advance in front of assaulting troops. The idea was to maintain a wall of fire as close as possible in front of the troops while they crossed no man’s land, and then penetrated the enemy defences. At a predetermined point the barrage would stop rolling forward and halt, and would then form a defensive fire barrier against enemy counter-attacks. Planning and executing a creeping barrage required well-trained gunners and staffs.

A French 155mm gun



VOIE SACRÉE

The Sacred Way

When Pétain arrived at Verdun, he immediately discerned that the battle was on the point of being lost for lack of supplies, especially ammunition. The main railway line through St Mihiel was in enemy hands and the other was disrupted by fire from long-range guns. The ammunition supply to Verdun was reduced to a trickle. This left a narrow-gauge railway and the second-class road from Bar-le-Duc 50 miles away. Fortunately, the road had recently been widened to 23 feet, just enough to permit two-way passage for trucks. Soon there would be half a million men at Verdun, whose ration requirement would be tiny compared with that of the 170,000 horses and mules, which consumed around 800 tons of bulky fodder each day.

Pétain's artillery tactics would be fruitless without the availability of prodigious quantities of heavy shells. The French force would require 2,000 tons of supplies a day and an extra 100 tons for every additional division brought in.

Fortunately, Major Richard, the garrison transport engineer, was a genius at organisation and had already acquired 3,500 trucks, improvising by stripping the Paris markets of their *camions*. With Pétain's iron will to back him, Richard imposed a rigorous regime on the road. The road was reserved for vehicles, while

marching men kept to the fields. Any broken-down truck was immediately heaved into the ditch. The road was divided into six cantonments, each with pioneers and workshops to service vehicles. The shortage of trained drivers meant that a man could spend up to 75 hours at the wheel without a break. Solid, treadless tyres made driving a nightmare in the icy winter conditions, and trucks frequently slid off and even turned upside-down. At night the continuous "snake" of dim acetylene headlamps illuminated the monstrous packs on the backs of the river of marching men.

On 28 February, the spring thaw turned the road into a morass, causing the trucks to bog. Richard ordered all available territorial troops to line the side of the road at danger-points, and to shovel gravel under the wheels of the passing trucks. In that week over 25,000 tons of supplies and 190,000 men passed along the road to Verdun. After this critical week, Pétain deployed a whole division just to keep the road repaired. By June, when the number of vehicles had risen to 12,000, one passed every 14 seconds.

Much of the work on the road was carried out by French colonial troops. Senegalese from West Africa worked alongside North Africans from Algeria and Morocco and Annamites from Indo-China. Meanwhile, up the road marched the



The French Soldier

Carrying about 20lbs of additional weight on the march, the French soldier suffered greater discomfort - including poorer medical services - and more savage discipline than his British or German counterpart. Some of this would have been avoidable with better administration; despite being the army of a republic, the inequality between French officers and soldiers was wider than that in the British or German armies. Dereliction of duty usually meant a death sentence carried out within 24 hours. However, the French soldier fought and endured with a fortitude that deserves our undying admiration.



Camions and soldiers on the Voie Sacrée



ABOVE: Senegalese soldiers, having arrived from Africa by ship, entraining at Frejus in the South of France for the Front



ABOVE: Camions pass each other on the Voie Sacrée. In June, with the road at full capacity, one vehicle passed a given point every 14 seconds



ABOVE: A tin of snack biscuits. Like "poilu", "piou-piou" became slang for a French soldier

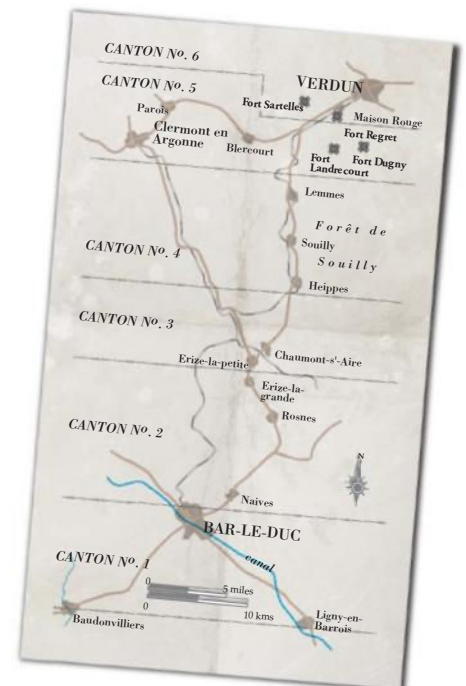


ABOVE: This brand of cigarettes was popular with the poilus

Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc (RICM) and the Tirailleurs and Zouaves of the 37th African Division.

All were outnumbered by the *poilus* (meaning "hairy"), a name that the soldiers disliked as journalistic jargon, much as modern British soldiers regard the term "squaddy". They rarely used it to refer to themselves, preferring *les bonhommes* ("the good old boys"). It is hard not to feel a sense of admiration for the long-suffering French soldiers on whom the fate of France ultimately rested. Clad in muddied "horizon-blue", their moustachioed and bearded faces gaze out at us from contemporary photographs under battered Adrian helmets. The cynical, black humour that sustains most soldiers to this day fed their sense of comradeship and their amazing *Esprit de corps* through years of agony that would have broken lesser men. Only in the latter stages of the war would they question the ruthlessly imposed tactics of *l'attaque à outrance* that led to so much useless slaughter.

Compared with the British and Imperial soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), the *poilus* were poorly cared for. The French army did not provide canteens or clubs in towns behind the line where its soldiers could relax and buy refreshment. There were no free leave-trains, so the badly paid soldier often spent his leave in the town in which his unit was resting, for lack of funds to buy a ticket home. Much of this would eventually be put right by Pétain, but not until 1917. Meanwhile, the French soldier would shrug, smile wryly, curse, fix his bayonet and heave his weary body up for yet another attack.



ABOVE: The Voie Sacrée, showing the division of the road into cantonments





**German infantry with flame-throwers
and grenades storm Le Mort Homme.**

“Courage, on les aura!”

The German attack started well when the 77th Brigade crossed the Meuse at Brabant in a

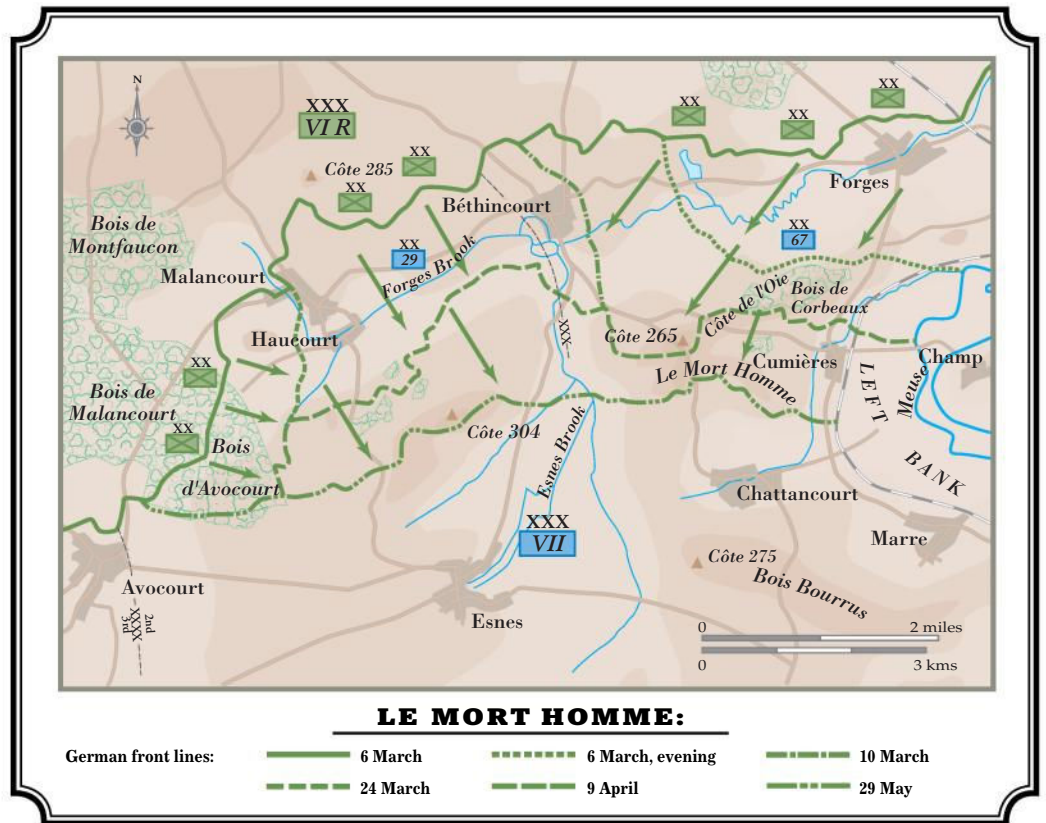
"In their vain attempt to hold this position, 10,000 Frenchmen died"

BELOW: A German time-fused "stick" grenade, known to the British as the "potato masher"



ABOVE: A shard of shrapnel from a bursting shell case, razor-sharp and capable of inflicting fearful wounds

MON 06 MAR – MON 29 MAY





snowstorm, and then joined the 22nd Division to capture Point 265 on Goose Ridge (Côte de l'Oie), the “panhandle” of the Mort Homme ridge. The remaining German attacks failed. But the next day, the whole of the Bois des Corbeaux fell to the Germans and it seemed Le Mort Homme would be next. General de Bazelaire, commanding French forces on the left bank, sent one of his best regiments under Lieutenant Colonel Macker to retake the Bois. He and the regiment walked the first 400 yards, calmly closing the gaps in its ranks that were torn by machine gun fire, and then charged the last hundred yards to take the Bois by the bayonet. The very next day Macker was killed just as a German attack came in and the remnants of his gallant regiment were consequently pushed back. But German losses were high in number and their attack was halted. The German offensive on the right bank also stalled, and although Vaux village changed hands 13 times, Fort Vaux itself was not taken.

On 14 March, six German divisions advanced on Le Mort Homme, but they were brought to a standstill by guns on Côte 304 raking the slopes of the feature they were trying to take. Clearly, the key to Le Mort Homme was Côte 304, and taking the Bois d'Avocourt first was the way to outflank the Côte and prise open the position. On 20 March, the 11th Bavarian Division took the Bois in four hours with very light casualties, and captured a whole French brigade in the process.

For the next three days, amid heavy rain and mud, there was stalemate as the French attempted to throw the Germans out of the Bois d'Avocourt, and the Germans tried to no avail to capitalise on their success.

On 9 April, General von Gallwitz, fresh from victory in Serbia, took over the left bank sector and mounted a full-blooded German attack on both Côte 304 and Le Mort Homme. The attack on Le Mort Homme was allocated to XXII Reserve Corps under Falkenhayn's older brother, who was so methodical that Gallwitz quipped, “we shall be in Verdun at the earliest by 1920”. The German attack on both objectives failed. For the next 12 days it rained, increasing the misery of soldiers on both sides. Pétain issued his famous order of the day, “*Courage, on les aura!*” (“*Courage, we shall have them!*”).

On 3 May, 500 heavy guns bombarded Côte 304. 48 hours later the Germans seized most of the Côte from the dazed defenders, but it took another three days of close-quarter battle before the hill was completely secure. In their vain attempt to hold this position, 10,000 Frenchmen died. The way to Le Mort Homme was finally clear and by the end of May the vital ridge was in German hands, as well as the village of Cumières. The German tide now advanced to the foot of the Bois Bourrus ridge.



ITEM 7

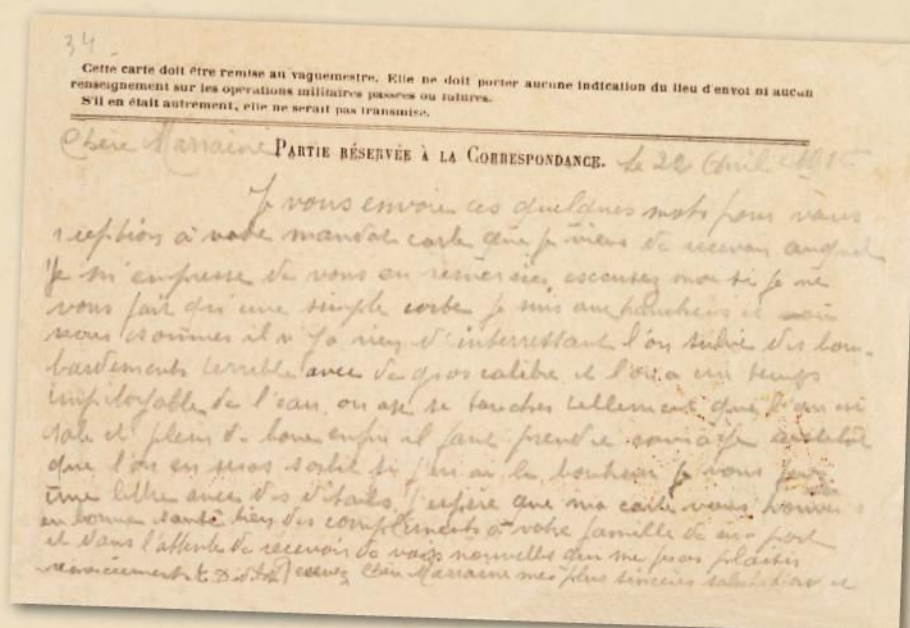
A postcard from E. Didelot to his "Godmother" describing the fighting on Côte 304.

26 April 1916

Dear Godmother,

I am writing these few words in order to [missing word] for your postal order which I have just received. I am making haste to write to you, please excuse me for simply sending you a card, I am embarrassed, where we are there is nothing interesting, we suffer from terrible bombardments from heavy artillery in pitiless weather of water and we [illegible] in the water [illegible] and full of [illegible] take courage immediately [illegible]

I will have the good fortune to write you a letter with your [illegible] I hope that my card finds you in good health, I present my compliments to your family and am hoping to hear your news which will give me pleasure, dear Godmother, my sincerest greetings and thanks.



ITEM 8

Fragmented extract from Pétain's Order of the Day for 10 April that immortalised his phrase "*On les Aura!*", which translated means "We shall overcome them!"

artillery, sappers and aviators of the Second Army have vied with each other in heroism. Honour to all!

The Germans will no doubt attack again. Each person must work and ensure they achieve the same success as they did yesterday. Courage. We shall overcome them.

Pétain

II^e ARMÉE
Etat-Major
3^e Bureau

Au Q.G.A., le 10 Avril 1916.

O R D R E
-1-1-1-

Le 9 Avril est une journée glorieuse pour nos armes.
Les assauts furieux des soldats du Kronprinz ont été partout
brisés. Fantassins, artilleurs, sapeurs, aviateurs de la II^e
Armée ont rivalisé d'héroïsme. Honneur à tous !
Les Allemands attaqueront sans doute encore. Que
chacun travaille et veille pour obtenir le même succès qu'hier.
Courage. On les aura.

Pétain

ITEM 9

One of Pétain's Second Army hand-written telegrams encouraging his forces.

Telegram for encoding

The evacuation of Béthancourt was taking place when I received your telegram no. 7399!!! In my opinion, the situation on the left bank is not bad, I hope to be able to completely stop the enemy. But the choice of position has very great importance. I therefore ask for confidence to be placed in me and that people are not impressed by a few partial, premeditated withdrawals.

Pétain

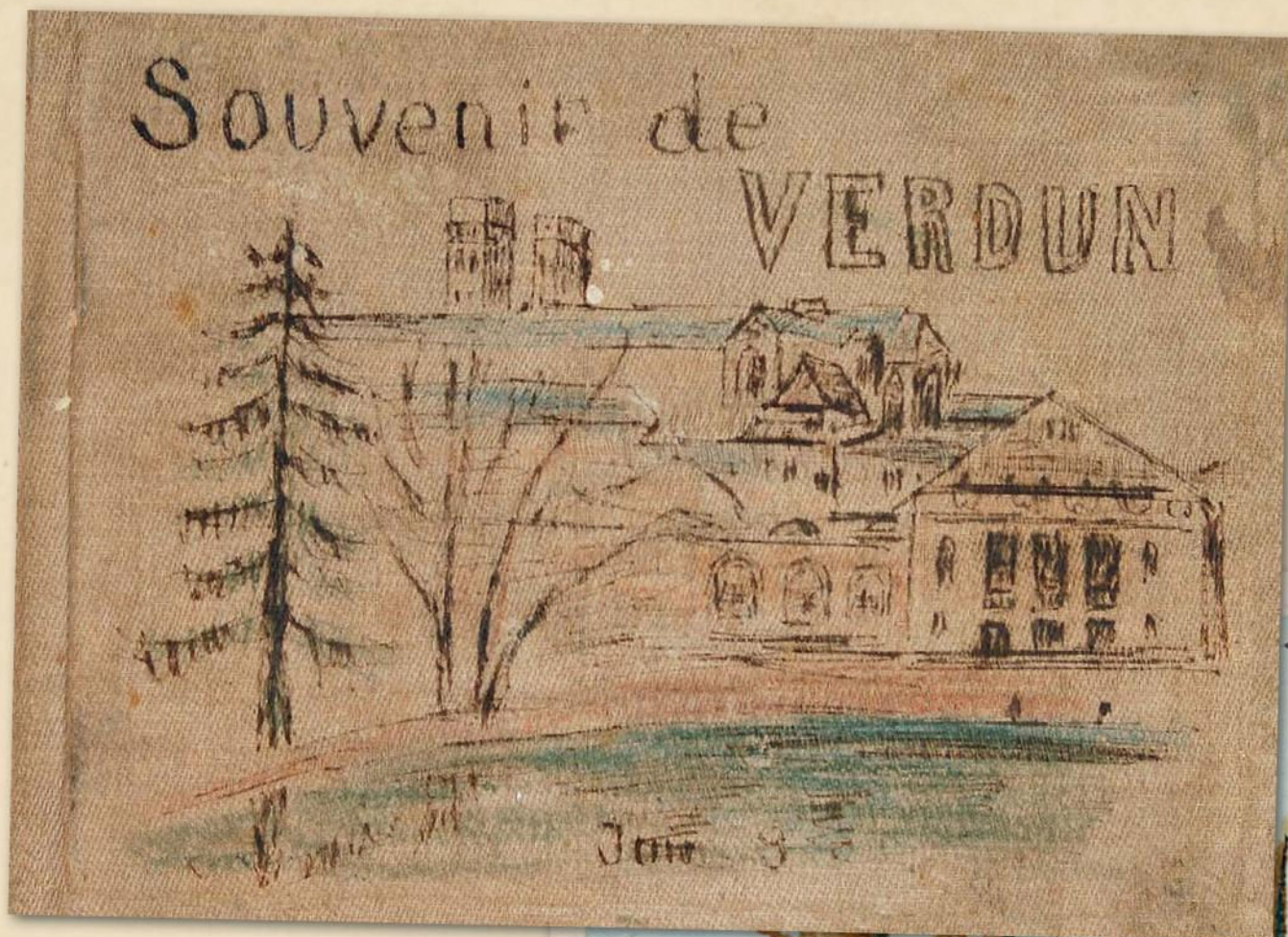
II^e Armée

Telegramme à chiffrer

L'évacuation de Béthancourt était en
voie d'accomplissement quand j'ai reçu votre
télégramme 7399!!! A mon avis, la
situation sur la rive gauche n'est
pas mauvaise, j'espère arriver à
arrêter complètement l'ennemi. Mais
le choix de la position a une très
grande importance. Je demande
donc qu'on me fasse confiance et
qu'on ne se laisse pas impressionner
par quelques seuls partiellement prémédités.

Pétain
CHIFFRE
Le 9 Avril 1916
à 9 h 30

J.C. N° 9643



our
1916.

ITEM 10

The sketchbook of French soldier Charles Grauss of the 339th Infantry Regiment, showing scenes painted during the battles for Verdun, including his dugout on the Mort Homme. Grauss survived Verdun but died of wounds in August 1918.





FORT VAUX

“ne quittez pas”

The German attacks on the right bank had ground to a halt by 11 March, and so von Knobelsdorf postponed any further attacks on Fort Vaux until fresh troops could be deployed. On 1 May, Pétain, considered by Joffre to be too defensive-minded, was “kicked upstairs” to command Central Army Group, which included Verdun. His replacement, General Robert Nivelle, was a disciple of the “attack at all costs” school. His right-hand man was General Charles Mangin, nicknamed “the Butcher”, who had commanded the 5th Division in Nivelle’s III Corps.

The renewed German offensive on Fort Vaux, which started on 7 May – the Crown Prince’s birthday – was a failure. The base for the German assaults on Fort Vaux was Fort Douaumont, which Mangin counter-attacked on 22 May. After two days of bitter fighting, during which the French managed to occupy the top of the fort, the battered survivors of two French regiments were withdrawn. On 1 June, meanwhile, the Germans seized key ground at Bois de la Caillette and Bois Fumin, positions which controlled the approaches to Fort Vaux.

Fort Vaux was far smaller than Fort Douaumont; its single 75mm gun had been

destroyed, leaving only machine guns, none of them in armoured turrets. Fort Vaux’s new commander was Major Sylvain-Eugène Raynal, who had already been badly wounded several times in the war. Raynal arrived at Vaux on 24 May. Fort Vaux was designed for a garrison of 250, but Raynal found 600 men there, mostly remnants left behind in the chaos of French withdrawals in the face of the German onslaught. Raynal’s telephone lines to the rear were cut leaving him only four pigeons with which to communicate with the outside world.

On 2 June, the Germans seized the outer galleries and, with the fort’s superstructure occupied by the enemy, the garrison withdrew to the two underground corridors. Here, behind a series of sandbagged barriers, the French soldiers fought mainly in a darkness lit only by muzzle-flash or the detonation of grenades. Bullets ricocheted along the walls. Exploding grenades deafened and concussed attacker and defender alike. Clouds of dust and fumes from the explosions clogged the already parched throats of the soldiers. The stench of decomposing dead bodies and human waste made men gag.

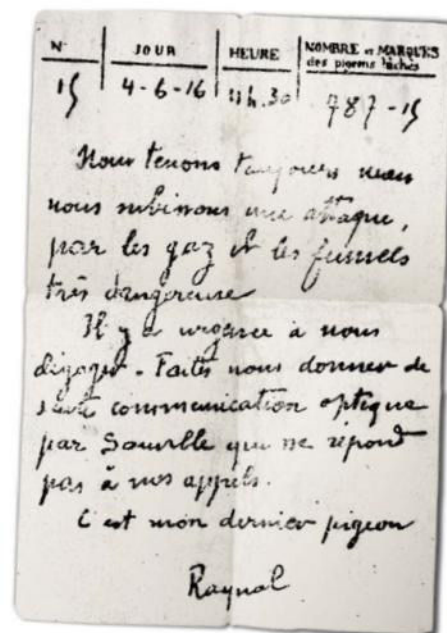
The German attackers, many of them still on the roof and outside the fort, also suffered as

SUN 07 MAY – WED 07 JUN



Major Sylvain-Eugène Raynal

Raynal responded to a call for volunteers among badly wounded and incapacitated officers, since the French realized that as the Germans advanced towards Fort Vaux, it was very likely that whoever commanded it would be killed or taken prisoner. Major Raynal hobbled forward and was selected.



ABOVE: The last carrier pigeon message sent by Major Raynal (translated below). The pigeon, Valient, shell shocked and gassed, died after delivering its message and was awarded the Légion d'honneur

4 June 1916. 11.30 a.m.

We are still holding but we are under attack, the gas and the air is very dangerous.

There is an urgency to relieve us. Take action to communicate with us optically with Souville which does not answer our calls.

This is my last pigeon.

Raynal



Two French walking wounded from Fort Vaux awaiting evacuation outside an aid post in Fort Tavannes. The labels indicate the location and nature of their wounds to inform medical staff overseeing the casualty evacuation



BELOW: French machine gunners during the fighting for Fort Vaux. This is probably a posed propaganda photograph, as a cameraman is unlikely to have put himself in such a location on a battlefield

ABOVE: A German rifleman takes up a position on the Verdun battlefield by the rotting corpse of a French soldier. By now many Germans were equipped with "coal scuttle" helmets



French artillery drenched the fort with shells. By the evening of 2 June, the two German attacking battalions were withdrawn. Early on 4 June, a French counter-attack by the 124th Division to relieve the garrison reached the western end of the Fort, but was hurled back. Later that day, German pioneers attempted to burn out Raynal's men with flame-throwers. Black smoke filled the corridors, before the deadly tongues of flame unaccountably flickered and died. An attack on the south-west corner bunker ended with all the German pioneers dead and their flame-throwers captured. These were put to good use by the French defenders. Raynal sent off his last pigeon, which fell dead after delivering its message and was awarded the Légion d'honneur.

Meanwhile Raynal, learning that there was practically no water left in the fort's cistern, ordered 300 useless mouths to evacuate Fort Vaux. Led by Officer Cadet Buffet, a few of them survived to reach French lines. Buffet returned

the next night with the message that a counter-attack was being prepared. It failed and morale in the fort fell to its lowest point; however, outside the fort progress was negligible, and the Germans began to wonder whether Vaux would ever fall.

In the end thirst won. Ninety wounded lay without water. Soldiers licked the moisture off the walls and drank their own urine. Raynal had held off the German Sixth Army for a week. After five days of fighting, the Germans had gained no more than 40 yards underground. On 7 June, Raynal decided he had no option but to surrender. Taken to see the German Crown Prince the next day, he was given the sword of another captured French officer as a token of the Prince's admiration.

A counter-attack ordered by Nivelle at dawn on 8 June involving the 2nd Zouaves and the RICM, was annihilated. Livid, Pétain forbade further counter-attacks on Fort Vaux.



Lieutenant Rackow

Rackow was the first to cross the moat of Fort Vaux and reach its roof with 30 men of the 158th Paderborn Regiment. For hours, they sat there totally isolated and under fire, until Lieutenant Ruberg arrived with a unit of pioneers, and Rackow ordered him to break into the fort. For the next two days, while Rackow's men occupied the roof, German assault troops worked their way into parts of the fort. After Raynal surrendered Fort Vaux, Rackow was photographed with him.

BELOW: German time-fused "ball" grenade. The throwing handle pulled the friction igniter as the grenade was thrown



General Robert Georges Nivelle

Nivelle rose rapidly from commanding an artillery regiment in 1914 to command of a corps by December 1915, and by April 1916 to commanding Second Army at Verdun. A man of boundless ambition and self-confidence, his charisma worked wonders on French and British politicians, and even on Lloyd George with his deep distrust of generals. Nivelle was cultured and confident, while being careless of casualties. He was a disastrous choice to succeed Joffre as Commander in Chief.

ITEM 11

The Message logbook from Nivelle's Verdun HQ for 6 and 7 June, telling the minute by-minute story of the desperate battle for Fort Vaux.

Day of 6 June, 1916

Received at 5.20 f
[regiment] (through an NCO,
a liaison officer):

The two companies advanced
on the German trench but
were received by a barrage
of grenades; the Battalion
commander was killed,
as well as the Company
Commander and several
officers, so the two
companies returned from
their starting trenches,
accompanied by a very strong
barrage of artillery.

Document continues...



Journée du 6 Juin 1916.

Reçu à 5 h.20 du P.C. CREIL -

A 20 heures, deux attaques allemandes débouchant l'une de DAMLOUP, l'autre venant du N-E. du Fort de VAUX sur la tranchée MONTBELIARD ont été complètement repoussées par le feu.

Pendant la nuit de nombreux isolés sont arrivés au Fort de VAUX (100 environ).

L'attaque prévue a été déclanchée à 2 heures; on a entendu immédiatement une fusillade violente et on vient d'avoir sur l'attaque des 2 Cies du 321^e le renseignement suivant: (par un S/Officier, agent de liaison):

Les 2 Cies ont abordé la tranchée allemande, mais ont été reçues par un barrage de grenades; le Chef de Btn ayant été tué, ainsi qu'un Commandant de Cie et plusieurs Officiers, les 2 Cies sont revenues à leurs tranchées de départ, accompagnées par un très fort barrage d'artillerie.

Ces renseignements viennent d'être confirmés par le Colonel Cat le 321^e qui établit un rapport qui ne nous est pas encore parvenu. Jusqu'à présent, aucun renseignement sur l'attaque des 2 Cies du 238^e (attaque de l'O. et de la gorge du Fort).

Un pionnier allemand du 27^e Rgt vient de se présenter à l'entrée N-E. du tunnel et a déclaré s'être échappé du Fort de VAUX lorsque les Français l'ont entouré.

Reçu à 7 h.10 de SOUVILLE (venant du Fort de VAUX) -

6 h.20 -: Recevez que sont envoyés et sans avoir obtenu objectif mitrailleuses ennemies au dessus du Fort; celles-ci auraient dû être battues par obus. Effectif engagé trop maigre.

Reçu à 7 h.15 de SOUVILLE (venant du Fort de VAUX) -

6 h.30: Je n'ai plus d'eau malgré le rationnement des jours précédents; Il faut que je sois dégagé et qu'un ravitaillement en eau me parvienne immédiatement. Je crois toucher au bout de mes forces. Les troupes - hommes et gradés - en toutes circonstances, ont fait leur devoir jusqu'au bout.

Je cite: Lieut^{ts}. de ROQUETTE et GIRARD du 53^e, BALY, ALBAGNAC du 142^e tous blessés, ALEROLLES, LARGUES, Aspirant TUZEL, adjudant BRUNE du 142^e, Lieut^{ts} de NIZET et REBATTET artilleurs, Lieut. ROY et aspirant BERARD du 2^e Génie, Caporal BONNIN du 142^e

Pertes: 7 tués dont Capitaine TABOUREAU du 142^e et Lieut. TOURNEAU du 101^e.

76 blessés dont 4 Officiers et les Médecins auxiliaires CONTE et GAILLARD.

Espère que vous intervenerez de nouveau énergiquement avant complet épuisement.

Envoyé à 7 h.30 à Général HIRSCHAUER -

Prenez vos dispositions pour remonter une nouvelle attaque aujourd'hui même. Je vous donne le 49^e B.C.P..

Préoccupez vous de lui constituer des guides volontaires pour lui faciliter sa progression sur le terrain d'attaque.

Envoyé à 8 h.30 Compte-rendu à SOUILLY -

Secteur de TAVANNES:

A 20 h. deux attaques allemandes débouchant l'une de DAMLOUP sur la batterie de DAMLOUP, l'autre au N-E. du Fort de VAUX, sur la tranchée de MONTBELIARD ont complètement échoué.

Renseignements

Received at 7.15 from SOULEVILLE (originating from the Fort de VAUX) -

6.30 hours: I have no water left despite the rationing of the previous days; I must be stood down and water provisions be sent to me immediately. I think my strength is exhausted. The troops - men and officers - in all circumstances, did their duty to the end.

I mention in dispatches: Lieutenants de ROQUETTE and GIRARD of the 53rd, BALY and ALBAGNAC of the 142nd, all of them wounded, ALEROLLES, LARGUES, Officer Cadet TUZEL, Adjudant BRUNE of the 142nd, Lieutenants de NIZET and REBATTET artillery officers, Lieutenant ROY and Officer Cadet BERARD of the 2nd Engineers, Corporal BONNIN of the 142nd.

Losses: 7 killed including Captain TABOUREAU of the 142nd and Lieut. TOURNEAU of the 101st.

76 wounded, including 4 officers and the medical auxiliaries CONTE and GAILLARD.

Hoping you will again intervene energetically before complete exhaustion.

Document continues...

Sent at 8.30 report to SOUILLY -

TAVANNES sector

At 20.00 hours, two German attacks were launched, one at DAMLOUP on the DAMLOUP battery, the other north-east of the VAUX Fort along the MONTBELIARD trench failed completely.

Information still incomplete concerning the attack prepared to relieve the VAUX Fort; the attack from the right (2 companies) advanced towards the German trenches. Received with heavy fire and a barrage of grenades, the two companies withdrew after losing a certain number of officers including the battalion commander; no information has yet arrived concerning the two other attacks directed against the western side and against the gorge of the Fort. A signal sent to the VAUX Fort was received by SOUVILLE. The Fort was still holding, but it seems that the attempt made that night to relieve it was unsuccessful.

Document continues...

6 Juin

Renseignements encore incomplets sur l'attaque préparée pour dégager le Fort de VAUX; l'attaque de droite (2 Cies) a abordé la tranchée allemande. Reçues par un feu nourri et un barrage de grenades, les 2 Cies ont reflué après avoir perdu un certain nombre d'officiers dont le Chef de Btn; aucun renseignement n'est encore parvenu au sujet des deux autres attaques dirigées contre la face Ouest et contre la gorge du Fort. Un message optique envoyé du Fort de VAUX a été reçu par SOUVILLE. Le Fort tient toujours, il semble que la tentative faite cette nuit pour le dégager n'ait pas réussi.

Secteur de SOUVILLE:

Nuit relativement calme.

4 prisonniers ont été faits au cours de la nuit:

- 1 pionnier du 27° (venu du Fort de VAUX)
- 2 hommes du 2° Rgt de Chasseurs Alpins, 10° Btn, et
- 1 homme du 36° Rgt d'Infanterie de Réserve venu de la région du Fort de DOUAUMONT.

Reçu à 8 h.45 de l'E.M. CREIL -

Attaque de cette nuit: à droite le Commandant FABRE du 321° dirigeant l'attaque, ayant auprès de lui le Lieutenant MARLIO de la 126° Brigade, à gauche le Commandant MATHIEU du 238° R.I.-L'ensemble est commandé par le Colonel ANDLAUER qui est au P.C. de la MONTAGNE près du P.C. dépôt. Il avait tout près de lui le lieutenant d'AUDIFFRED-PASQUIER de la 124° DI., le Commandant DOR de l'Etat-Major du Groupement.

Reçu de TAVANNES à 9 h.20 (Cdt. DOR).-

Aucun renseignement précis sur l'attaque à la gauche et sur la gorge du Fort - les agents de liaison ne sont pas revenus, d'autres ont été envoyés.- L'observateur d'artillerie de TAVANNES a la sensation que nous aurions progressé vers l'Ouest.

Reçu de SOUILLY à 10 h.20 -

Deux régiments, l'un de zouaves, l'autre de coloniaux, formés en brigade seront transportés ce soir (heure non encore fixée) à HAUDAINVILLE.

Les Commandants de ces Régiments seront aujourd'hui 6 JUIN à 14 h. à DUGNY où ils se présenteront au Général LEBRUN.

Ordres écrits suivent.

(Téléphoné par Commandant PINEAU à Chef d'Etat-Major).

Reçu de P.C. CREIL à 16 h.45.-

Activité habituelle de l'artillerie ennemie.- Aucune action d'Infanterie.

Fort de TAVANNES.- E.M. P-16.-

Colonel 126° Brigade à Général Commandant 63° DI.-16 heures.-
Ai fait nécessaire selon vos ordres.

Reçu à 16 h.50 du P.C. MARCEAU.-

Journée calme.- Rien de particulier à signaler.

Reçu à 17 heures 15 de SOUILLY (3^e Bureau)

Les Régiments Coloniaux qui devaient être transportés ce soir en autos auront une partie de leurs éléments débarqués à HAUDAINVILLE et le reste à DUGNY.

Reçu à 17 heures 15 de TAVANNES (P.33 - 16.25)

Colonel 126^e à Général 63^e.
Ai fait parvenir votre ordre concernant guides à fournir ce soir à Colonel Commandant la 125^e Brigade.
(Transmis à P.C. CREIL).

Reçu à 18 heures de SOUVILLE.-

Journée beaucoup plus calme que précédente au point de vue artillerie. Pas d'action d'Infanterie. Organisation rapide du Secteur, quelques tirs intermittents des mitrailleuses ennemies.

Envoyé à 18 heures à SOUILLY.-

Journée relativement calme.

Reçu à 19 heures 35 .

Un observateur de la redoute de FLEURY signale que les Allemands montent en colonnes de compagnie à l'assaut du Fort de VAUX.
(Transmis à CREIL à 19 heures 45).

Reçu à 20 heures 30 du 3^{me} Bureau de SOUILLY.-

Télégramme du Général Commandant en Chef pour être transmis au Fort de VAUX par optique:
" Le Général Commandant en Chef adresse au Commandant du Fort de VAUX,
" au Commandant de la garnison du Fort ainsi qu'à leurs troupes,
" l'expression de sa satisfaction pour leur magnifique défense contre
" les assauts répétés de l'ennemi".

J. JOFFRE.

Ce message sera transmis ce soir par la Tour EIFFEL. L'Armée recevra ce soir et transmettra immédiatement l'énumération des récompenses accordées par le Général en Chef aux défenseurs du Fort de VAUX.
(Transmis à SOUVILLE qui le passe à VAUX toutes les deux heures à partir de 20 heures 45 et qui rend compte à 2 heures que VAUX ne répond pas.

Envoyé à 21 Heures 5 à P.C. CREIL.

Le Général LEBRUN rappelle qu'il désire avoir demain matin copie des ordres détaillés du Général HIRSCHAUER ainsi que les ordres détaillés de l'artillerie.

Le Général NIVELLE appelle l'attention sur la nécessité de faire les barrages de 75 sur les points les plus rapprochés de notre front pouvant être occupés par l'ennemi.

Reçu à 21 heures 20 de SOUILLY (3^e Bureau)

Les observateurs signalent des fusées rouges dans la direction de DOUAUMONT.

Reçu.....

Received at
19.35 hours

An observer
from the FLEURY
redoubt has
signalled that
the German are
ascending in
company columns
to attack the
VAUX Fort.

German infantry
- penetrations
constantly indicated
in the Fond de la
HORGNE - at 20.00
assault columns
attacked the VAUX Fort
to which they were
climbing. - They were
stopped by a barrage
from our Artillery.
Until 23.00 hours,
the French barrage
extended along the
whole front.

Miscellaneous.-
About 200 men in all
were taken from the
Fort during the night
of 5th to 6th, a few
of whom from the 17/31
Company.

They are about 150
sick or wounded and
the need for water is
extreme. The morale
of the defenders
is upheld by men of
the 16th class. An
artillery observer at
the TAVANNES Fort has
signalled that the
armoured cupola of
the VAUX Fort may have
been blown apart.

Document continues...

Reçu à 21 heures 25 de SOUILLY.-

L'observatoire de MOULAINVILLE signale à 21 heures 25 une action d'artillerie très violente sur VAUX. Fusées rouges en gerbes direction MARDI-GRAS et LA LAUFEE.
(Transmis à P.C. CREIL).

Reçu à 21 Heures 35 de SOUILLY.-

Les observateurs de la cote du POIVRE signalent à 20 heures 35 des mouvements de troupes importants venant du village de DOUAUMONT, se dirigeant vers les Carrières d'HAUDROMONT.
(Transmis à P.C. MARCEAU)

Reçu à 20 heures 25 de REGRET (Observatoire)

Cote du POIVRE signale que les Allemands venant de DOUAUMONT descendent à pleins boyaux dans le Ravin de la DAME et les Carrières d'HAUDROMONT.

Artillerie REGRET tire dessus depuis un moment.
(Transmis à l'Artillerie et à P.C. MARCEAU).

Reçu à 21 heures de SOUILLY.-

Le Commandant RAYNAL est fait Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur.
(Passé à P.C.M. avec prière de faire l'impossible pour le passage à VAUX -Désir du Général en Chef.)

Journée du 7 Juin 1916

Reçu à 7 heures du P.C. M. -

Un peu de canonnade. Nuit calme en général.
Relève effectuée sans incident. Une section de mitrailleuses en panne sera relevée ce soir.

Reçu à 7 h.30 du P.C. CREIL -

125^e Brigade: Lutte intense d'artillerie. Aucune action d'infanterie signalée.- Mouvements prévus exécutés sans incident.
Visite d'un Chef de Btn du G.C.G. dans la nuit.

126^e Brigade: Grande activité de l'artillerie allemande, principalement sur la FME et Fort de TAVANNES vers 23 h.15.
Violent barrage à 23 heures 15 à l'entrée Est du tunnel qui a produit un embouteillage partiel.
Creusement de la tranchée AMILHAT au S. du Fort sur une longueur de 300 mètres.

Déblaiement du boyau FONTAINE de TAVANNES - Redoute de DAMLOUP.
Infanterie Allemande - Infiltrations constamment signalées dans le Fond de la HORGNE.- A 20 heures, des colonnes d'assaut attaquent le Fort de VAUX sur lequel elles montent.- Elles sont arrêtées par le barrage de notre Artillerie.- Jusqu'à 23 heures, le barrage français s'étend sur tout le front.

Divers.- Environ 200 hommes en tout sont sortis du Fort dans la nuit du 5 au 6 dont quelques uns de la Cie 17/31.
Ils ont 150 malades ou blessés environ et le besoin d'eau est extrême. Le moral des défenseurs est soutenu par les hommes de la classe 16. Un observateur d'artillerie du Fort de TAVANNES signale que la colonne blindée du Fort de VAUX serait éventrée.

Reçu de P.C. M. -

Vers 3 h.50, VAUX a fait des appels, on a pu comprendre simplement ces 3 mots: "Ne quittez pas"
Aussitôt le projecteur de SOUVILLE a repassé à VAUX les deux messages du Général en Chef.- Il les lui a passés toutes les deux heures et lui a fait des appels toutes les 10 minutes.

Envoyé à 8 heures à SOUILLY -

Une violente attaque ennemie prononcée à 20 heures sur le Fort de VAUX a échoué sous nos feux.
Notre artillerie a maintenu ses barrages jusqu'à 23 heures.
Le reste de la nuit a été relativement calme.
Le Fort de VAUX a fait des signaux optiques à 3 h.50.
Les deux messages du Général en Chef lui ont été passés à plusieurs reprises.

Reçu à 10 heures de la Tourelle -

Le Général BOYER rend compte qu'il prend le commandement du Secteur à 10 heures.

Reçu à 12 heures de P.C. CREIL -

Activité habituelle des deux artilleries.
Aucune action d'Infanterie n'a été signalée.

12 h.15.....

Received from
Headquarters Command
Post

At about 03.50, VAUX made calls, all we were able to understand were simply these three words: "Do not quit".

Immediately, the SOUVILLE projector repeated to VAUX the two messages from the General in Chief. It continued to send them every two hours and called to it every ten minutes.

Document continues...

Sent at 08.00 to
SOUILLY

A violent enemy attack was pronounced at 20.00 on the VAUX Fort failed under our fire.

Our artillery maintained its barrages until 23.00.

The rest of the night was relatively quiet.

The VAUX Fort sent signals at 03.50.

The two messages from the General in Chief were sent to it several times.

Document continues...

Reçu à 12 h.15 de P.C. M. (E.M. BOYER) -

Grande activité de notre artillerie pendant la nuit et la matinée.
Rien de particulier à signaler.

Reçu à 14 h. du Colonel Cat 1'A.D/151 -

Téléphone au sujet des 3 mortiers de 75 T mis par nous à sa disposition. Conclusions :

Dès que les mortiers qui lui sont annoncés par ailleurs lui parviendront, le Colonel A.D/151 fera connaître au Groupement où et à quelle date il remettra à sa disposition les 3 mortiers prêtés.

Reçu à 16 h.40 de SOUILLY -

Le Grand Quartier téléphone qu'un radio allemand annonce la prise du Fort de VAUX.

Reçu à 17 heures de P.C. M. -

Rien de particulier à signaler.
Bombardement assez intense dans le Sous-Secteur de droite. Pas d'action d'infanterie.

Reçu à 18 h.20 de P.C. CREIL -

Rien à signaler.

Reçu à 18 h.30 de SOUVILLE -

Rien à signaler sauf un bombardement assez intense sur le sous-secteur de droite depuis 14 heures.

Envoyé à P.C. CREIL par Chef E.M. -

1 Cie SCHILTZ va arriver. Nous vous enverrons successivement:
1°- le Commandant de la Compagnie,
2°- la Cie elle même.

Envoyé à 18 h.45 à SOUILLY le C/R/ de 18 heures.

Bombardement assez intense depuis 14 heures du S/Secteur de droite de la D.I. de SOUVILLE.
Activité habituelle de l'artillerie ennemie sur le front de TAVANNES.
Aucune action d'infanterie n'a été signalée.

Reçu à 18 h.45 du Général BOYER - (à Chef d'E.M.)

Observateur du Fort de SOUVILLE signale que l'aspect extérieur des voûtes 7 et 8 du Fort de VAUX est profondément modifié. La voûte elle même peut être intacte mais le pare-éclats en sacs à terre ou bien en pierres est presque complètement détruit devant les salles 7 et 8.

Le pare-éclats de la casemate 9 est intact. A mes appels optiques renouvelés plusieurs fois, aucune manifestation d'aucune sorte n'a été constatée. Un schémades voûtes 7, 8 et 9 sera envoyé.

Reçu à 18 h.50 du Colonel ESTIENNE (à Chef d'E.M.) -

Un Officier de mon E.M. (Lieutenant GOVY) qui vient de voir le Général HIRSCHAUER m'exprime le désir de ce dernier de nous voir tirer avec du 270 et du 280, sur la gorge du Fort de VAUX.

Faut-il le faire ?

Réponse du Chef d'E.M. au Colonel ESTIENNE :
Attendez.

18 h.55.....

Reçu à 12 h.15 de P.C. M. (E.M. BOYER) -

Grande activité de notre artillerie pendant la nuit et la matinée.
Rien de particulier à signaler.

Reçu à 14 h. du Colonel Cat 1'A.D/151 -

Téléphone au sujet des 3 mortiers de 75 T mis par nous à sa disposition. Conclusions :

Dès que les mortiers qui lui sont annoncés par ailleurs lui parviendront, le Colonel A.D/151 fera connaître au Groupement où et à quelle date il remettra à sa disposition les 3 mortiers prêtés.

Reçu à 16 h.40 de SOUILLY -

Le Grand Quartier téléphone qu'un radio allemand annonce la prise du Fort de VAUX.

Reçu à 17 heures de P.C. M. -

Rien de particulier à signaler.
Bombardement assez intense dans le Sous-Secteur de droite. Pas d'action d'infanterie.

Reçu à 18 h.20 de P.C. CREIL -

Rien à signaler.

Reçu à 18 h.30 de SOUVILLE -

Rien à signaler sauf un bombardement assez intense sur le sous-secteur de droite depuis 14 heures.

Envoyé à P.C. CREIL par Chef E.M. -

1 Cie SCHILTZ va arriver. Nous vous enverrons successivement:
1°- le Commandant de la Compagnie,
2°- la Cie elle même.

Envoyé à 18 h.45 à SOUILLY le C/R/ de 18 heures.

Bombardement assez intense depuis 14 heures du S/Secteur de droite de la D.I. de SOUVILLE.

Activité habituelle de l'artillerie ennemie sur le front de TAVANNES.
Aucune action d'infanterie n'a été signalée.

Reçu à 18 h.45 du Général BOYER - (à Chef d'E.M.)

Observateur du Fort de SOUVILLE signale que l'aspect extérieur des voûtes 7 et 8 du Fort de VAUX est profondément modifié. La voûte elle même peut être intacte mais le pare-éclats en sacs à terre ou bien en pierres est presque complètement détruit devant les salles 7 et 8.

Le pare-éclats de la casemate 9 est intact. A mes appels optiques renouvelés plusieurs fois, aucune manifestation d'aucune sorte n'a été constatée. Un schémades voûtes 7, 8 et 9 sera envoyé.

Reçu à 18 h.50 du Colonel ESTIENNE (à Chef d'E.M.) -

Un Officier de mon E.M. (Lieutenant GOUVY) qui vient de voir le Général HIRSCHAUER m'exprime le désir de ce dernier de nous voir tirer avec du 270 et du 280, sur la gorge du Fort de VAUX.

Faut-il le faire ?

Réponse du Chef d'E.M. au Colonel ESTIENNE :

Attendez.

18 h.55.....

Received at 16.40
from SOUILLY

Staff headquarters
telephones to say
that a German radio
station has announced
that the VAUX Fort
has been captured.

Document continues...

Envoyé à 18 h.55 au Général HIRSCHAUER - (par le Chef d'E.M.) -

Le Colonel ESTIENNE nous fait connaître que vous auriez exprimé le désir de voir notre Artillerie (270 et 280) tirer sur la gorge du Fort de VAUX. Ce désir est-il bien le vôtre ?

Reçu à 19 h. du Général HIRSCHAUER (à Chef E.M. - Cdt WAYMEL, auditeur au 2°
écouteur)

Je n'ai pas demandé le tir de 270 et 280 sur la gorge du Fort de VAUX. J'ai seulement dit qu'en raison même du radio boche, il semble que l'on doive moins s'attacher aux précautions antérieures ayant pour but d'éviter, autant que possible, l'entrée de nos obus dans la façade de gorge du Fort. La préparation ayant pour objet de détruire tout ce que les Boches peuvent avoir sur la superstructure du Fort (mitrailleuses en particulier) peut donc sans craindre de tirer trop court, être serrée jusqu'à la lèvre Sud de la superstructure du Fort, - de manière à détruire tout.

Pour le gros (270, 280) on verra plus tard.

Envoyé à 19 h.5 par le Chef d'E.M. au COLONEL ESTIENNE -

La réponse du Général HIRSCHAUER exactement comme elle fut faite.

Reçu à 20 h.50 de l'Artillerie (Capitaine KELLER) -

L'observatoire de MOULAINVILLE signale à 20 h.35 une attaque allemande se déclanchant dans la direction de VAUX - DAMLOUP.

(L'artillerie a déjà prévenu TAVANNES; elle a agi en ce qui la concerne).

ITEM 12

Joffre's optically transmitted message of encouragement to the defenders of Vaux, saying that he is pleased with their magnificent defence against repeated enemy attacks.

Telegram from the General Commander in Chief to be transmitted to the VAUX Fort by signal:

"The General Commander in Chief addresses the Commander of the VAUX Fort, to the Commander of the garrison of the Fort, as well as to their troops, the expression of his satisfaction for their magnificent defence against the repeated assaults by the enemy.

J. JOFFRE"

This message will be transmitted this evening by the EIFFEL Tower. The army will receive it this evening and will immediately transmit the list of awards granted by the General in Chief to the defenders of the VAUX Fort.

20 h.30 du 3me Bureau de SOUILLY.

Télégramme du Général Commandant en Chef pour être transmis au Fortbde VAUX par optique:

" Le Général Commandant en Chef adresse au Commandant
" du Fort de VAUX, au Commandant de la garnison du Fort
" ainsi qu'à leurs troupes, l'expression de sa satisfaction
" pour leur magnifique défense contre les assauts répétés
" de l'ennemi.

J. JOFFRE ".

Ce message sera transmis ce soir par la Tour EIFFEL
L'Armée recevra ce soir et transmettra immédiatement l'énumération des récompenses accordées par le Général en Chef défenseurs du Fort de VAUX.

ITEM 13

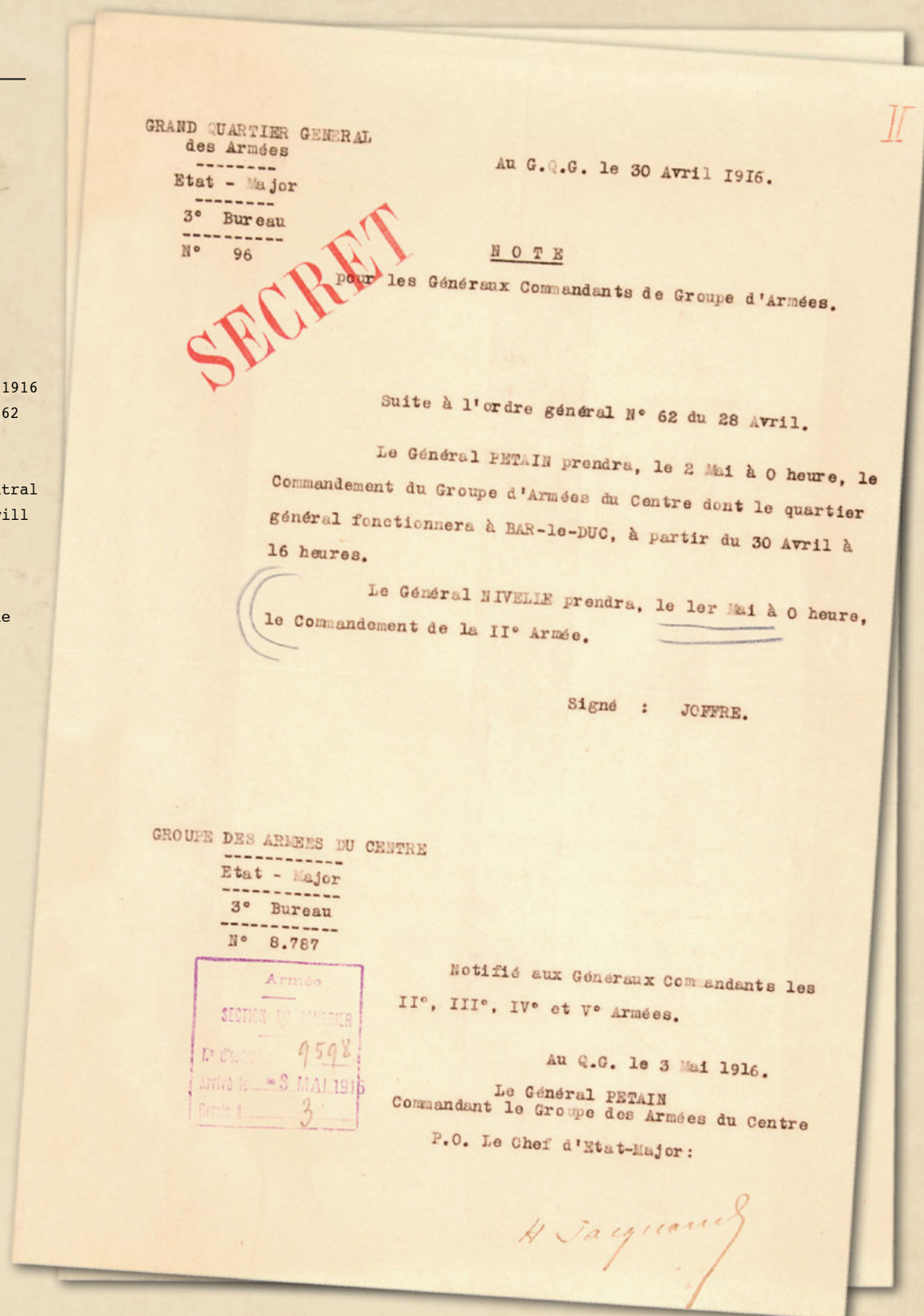
Joffre's 30 April announcement that from 2 May Pétain would be promoted to command Central Army Group, with General Nivelle taking over command of Second.

To Army Headquarters, 30 April 1916
Further to general order no. 62 of 28 April.

On 2 May at 0 hours, General PETAIN will take Command of Central Army Group whose headquarters will operate at BAR-le-DUC, from 30 April, at 16.00 hours.

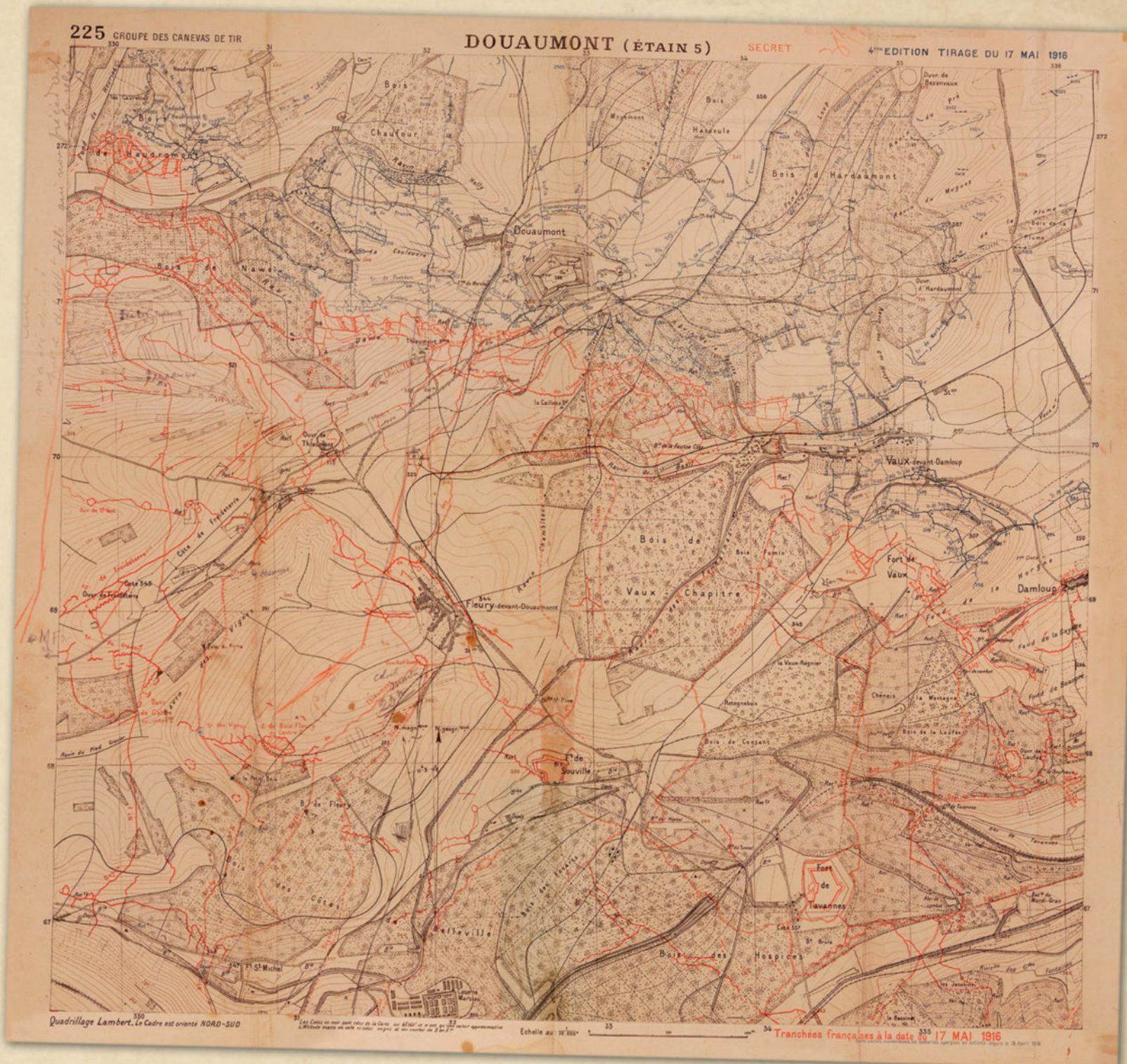
On 1 May at 0 hours, General NIVELLE will take command of the Second Army.

Signed: JOFFRE

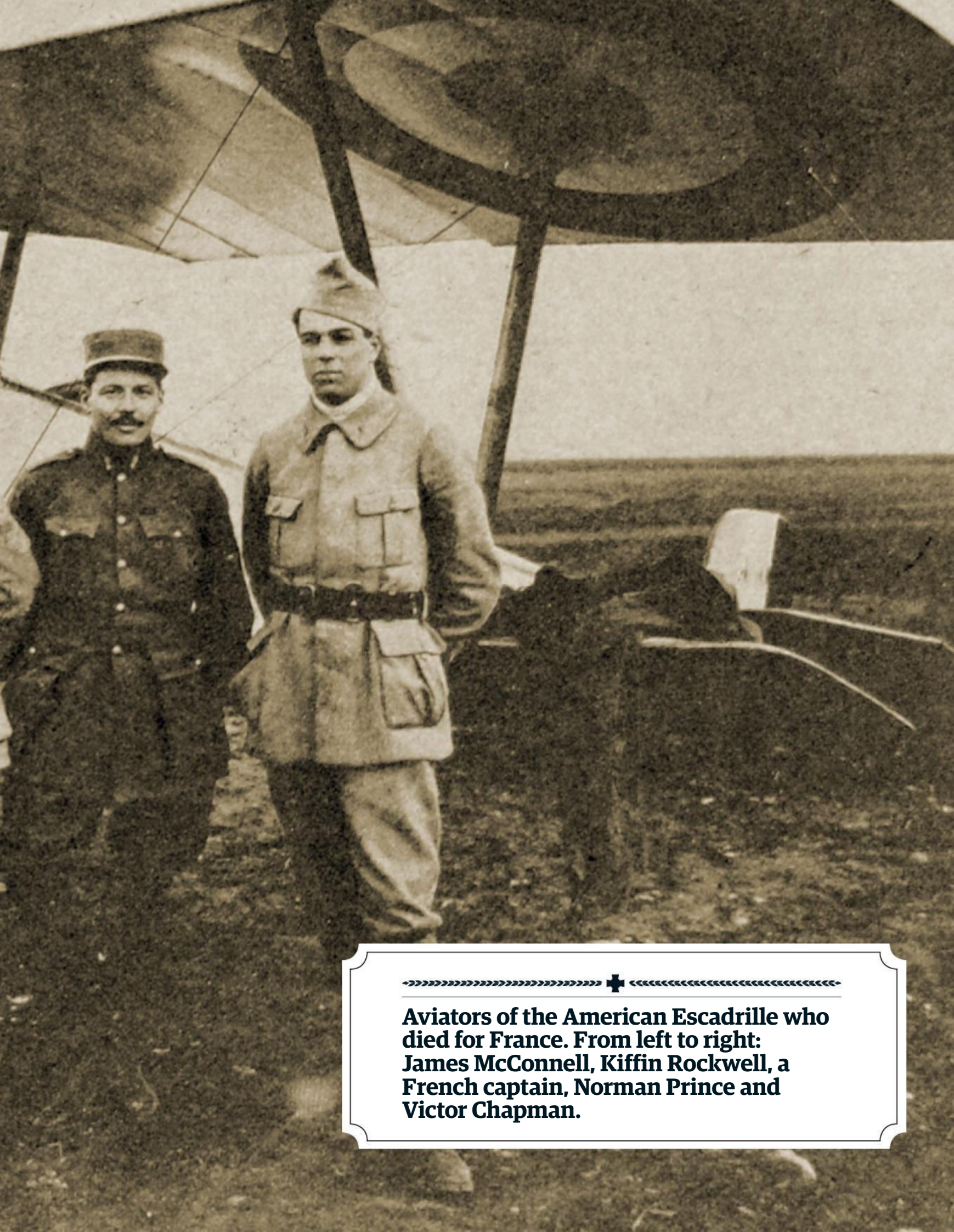


ITEM 14

The 17 May operations map used by General Costantini at the HQ of the Fleury-Douaumont sector on the right bank at Verdun.







Aviators of the American Escadrille who died for France. From left to right: James McConnell, Kiffin Rockwell, a French captain, Norman Prince and Victor Chapman.

AIR WAR OVER VERDUN

The Battle for Command of the Skies

The Germans seized the initiative in the air over Verdun before the battle began, concentrating their fighters to deny the French observation over their lines and so to keep the forthcoming attack secret. Although German supremacy in the air continued for a few weeks after the battle started, the French quickly realised that control of the air was vital if they were to carry out reconnaissance and spot for artillery. Until now they had given priority to observation and bombardment tasks and had dispersed their pursuit planes (or fighters) across the front, using them to escort aircraft engaged in these tasks. Clearly this had to change. As early as 29 February, the French Second Army's aviation commander sent out offensive reconnaissance patrols to find and destroy the enemy. French pilots who had hitherto regarded air combat as an individual matter, now learned to operate in groups.

The GQG aviation commander, Colonel Barès, concentrated his forces at Verdun. He ordered one of his squadron commanders, Major Tricornot de Rose, to wrest the initiative from the Germans. At Verdun, de Rose grouped all the

Morane-Saulnier and Nieuport aircraft and the best pilots into 15 elite squadrons. On 21 March, Joffre established an aeronautical command under Barès, with de Rose's fighter squadrons directly under his command. The primary task of de Rose's fighters was to attack the enemy air force, not to protect French aircraft or support ground troops. The concept of fighting for command of the air took off.

Operating in sections of four or five aircraft, the French fighters swept the skies clear of German aircraft, enabling their own artillery-spotting aircraft, tethered balloons and reconnaissance aircraft to go about their business unmolested. To surprise the Germans, some French aces flew alone or in pairs above the patrols, which they used as bait for enemy fighters. Despite severe losses, including de Rose who was killed in an accident, the French wrested back air superiority within their own airspace. The French response was so quick that the Germans were taken by surprise, despite the efforts of aces such as the Fokker pilots Max Immelman and Oswald Boelcke. Total air supremacy was never actually achieved – it rarely is – but French fighter sweeps



Max Immelman

Immelmann, the "Eagle of Lille", became the first to score a kill while flying a Fokker EIII on 1 August 1915. He devised the turn (a simultaneous loop and roll) named after him. The cause of his death on 18 June 1916, over Loos, is still unresolved. Initial reports stated that his aircraft fell apart in mid-air, perhaps due to a gun-synchronizer malfunction. Anthony Fokker (the aircraft's designer), his reputation at stake, examined the wreckage and pronounced that the control wires had been shot through. A British FE2b crew who had shot at him claimed responsibility.



ABOVE: Lieutenant Charles Nungesser by his Nieuport with a macabre insignia. He scored 43 victories and 11 probables. Nungesser was awarded a Croix de Guerre (left) with 28 Palmes and two stars, as well as eight foreign decorations

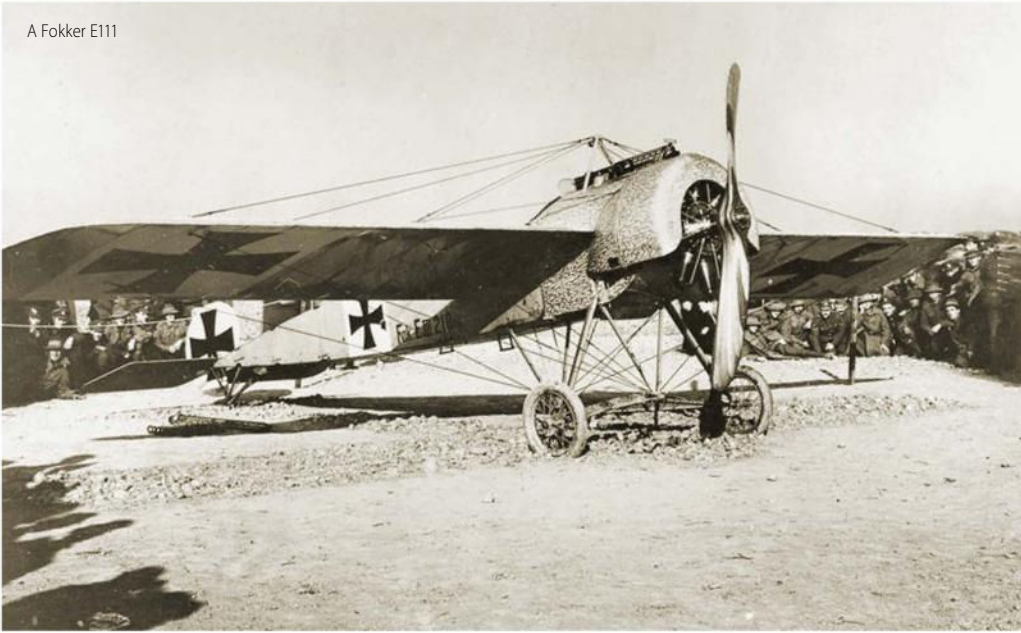
"The fellow was so riddled that vaporized blood sprayed on my hood, windshield and cap, and goggles" - Pilot Albert Louis Deullin



ABOVE, TOP: A German Fokker E111 Eindecker

ABOVE, BOTTOM: Nungesser's Nieuport 17, N1895, from early summer 1916

A Fokker E111



A Morane-Saulnier Parasol takes to the skies



over the German lines continued to keep enemy fighters off the backs of the reconnaissance and spotter aircraft.

The fighting in the skies over Verdun produced such aces as Jean Navarre (the “sentinel of Verdun”), Georges Guynemer, and Charles Nungesser. Guynemer won 21 victories in 1916, including a triple kill one day in March. In May the American volunteer pilots of the American (later Lafayette) Escadrille (Squadron) N124 arrived over Verdun in Nieuports, and only five days after their first sortie, Kiffin Rockwell gained the squadron’s first victory.

Many pilots experienced a savage pleasure in shooting down an enemy. Albert Deullin attacked a Fokker over Verdun and put 25 rounds in the cockpit at less than 10 metres range: “The fellow was so riddled that vaporized blood sprayed on my hood, windshield and cap, and goggles. The descent from 2,600 metres was delicious to

contemplate,” related Deullin.

By June, the Germans desperately needed a new fighter aeroplane. But even when the Albatros appeared with its superior armament, the French Nieuport’s greater agility and a new 100-cartridge drum for its Lewis gun still enabled pilots like Guynemer to take on the Germans over their own airfields. Nevertheless, the Albatros eventually heralded the loss of French fighter superiority in the see-saw battle of technology, until the balance tipped back yet again.

Had not the French wrested command of the air from the Germans so quickly, the battle of Verdun might well have been lost. For example, the Germans never even attempted to attack the *Voie Sacrée* from the air. Had they done so, this might have entailed disastrous consequences for the French. In the final reckoning, French speed of reaction, *élan*, and *cran* (or sheer guts) was decisive in the skies above Verdun.



Georges Guynemer

Guynemer achieved his first victory on 19 July 1915. By Christmas Eve that year, he was a sergeant and a Chevalier of the Legion d’honneur. On 3 February 1916, he downed two aircraft within the space of 30 minutes. Wounded over Verdun, he made a swift recovery, raising his score to 25 by the end of 1916. After Verdun, Guynemer was promoted to captain and went on to notch up a total of 53 victories - with another 35 probables - including a quadruple kill on 25 May 1917. On 11 September 1917, he disappeared over Poelcapelle, north-east of Ypres.



Navarre's Nieuport fighter over Verdun


ABOVE: French flying officer's armband

ITEM 15

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE



SERVICE AÉRONAUTIQUE

GRAND QUARTIER GÉNÉRAL

DES

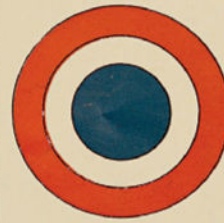
ARMÉES FRANÇAISES

INSTRUCTIONS

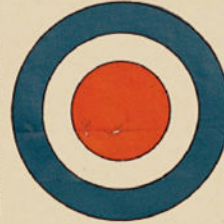
En cas d'atterrissage d'Aéronefs sur le territoire de la Zone des Armées

Marques distinctives. — 1° Les aéronefs alliés portent une cocarde tricolore sous les ailes et à chaque extrémité, et des bandes tricolores à la queue.

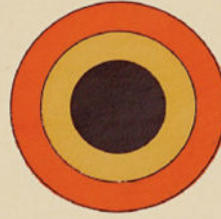
COCARDES FRANÇAISES



COCARDES ANGLAISES

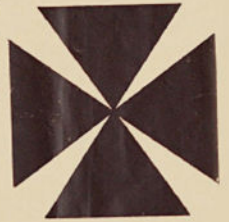


COCARDES BELGES



2° Les aéronefs allemands ont comme insigne la Croix de Malte sous chaque aile, sur le fuselage et la queue.

CROIX DE MALTE PEINTE EN NOIR



Tout aviateur atterrissant dans la zone des Armées, en dehors des terrains d'atterrissage, doit décliner ses nom et qualités et présenter sa carte d'aviateur militaire aux autorités militaires ou civiles qui se présenteront. Le pilote sera responsable des déclarations d'identité des passagers.

Atterrissage d'Aéroplanes français ou alliés. — Si l'atterrissage a lieu à proximité d'une garnison, le Commandant d'Armes fera assurer le gardiennage de l'appareil. Lorsque l'aviateur atterrit loin d'une garnison, mais à proximité d'une Brigade de Gendarmerie, le Chef de la Brigade assurera, s'il le peut, la garde de l'avion au moyen de son personnel, ou procurera à l'aviateur des hommes de confiance. A défaut de Gendarmerie, le Maire de la commune doit faire assurer le gardiennage de l'avion dans les mêmes conditions.

Atterrissage d'Aéroplanes allemands. — En cas d'atterrissage ennemi, le Commandant de la Brigade de Gendarmerie ou le Maire de la commune s'assurent de la personne des aviateurs ennemis et en préviennent immédiatement le Général commandant l'Armée ou la Région.

En cas de velléité de remise en marche de l'aéroplane, user de violence pour empêcher le départ, en brisant soit la queue de l'aéroplane, soit une roue.

L'aéroplane doit être conservé intact jusqu'à l'arrivée des Autorités Militaires compétentes.

Au G. Q. G., le 22 Avril 1916.

Pour le Général Commandant en Chef,

Le Major Général,

PELLÉ.

A poster published on 22 April explaining procedures for dealing with airmen landing in Allied territory, and showing the identifying roundel designs used by the French, British, Belgian and German airforces.

INSTRUCTIONS

In case aeroplanes land on territory in the Army zones.

Distinctive markings. — 1° The allied aeroplanes are marked with a three-coloured rosette under the wings and at each tip and three-coloured strips on the tail.

2° The German aeroplanes have as insignia the Maltese Cross under each wing on the fuselage and the tail.

Any aviator landing in the Army zones, outside landing strips, must state his name and rank and present his military aviator card to the military or civil authorities who present themselves. The pilot shall be responsible for declarations of identity of his passengers.

Landing of French or allied aeroplanes. — If the landing has taken place close to a garrison, the Commander of Arms shall be responsible for guarding the aircraft. When an aviator lands far from a garrison but near a Brigade of Gendarmes, the Chief of the Brigade shall guard

the plane, if he is able, through his staff, or shall find trustworthy men for the aviator. If there is no Gendarmerie, the Mayor of the commune must arrange for the plane to be guarded under the same conditions.

Landing of German aeroplanes. — If the enemy lands, the Commander of the Brigade of Gendarmes, or the Mayor of the commune shall check that the person of the enemy aviators and shall immediately inform the General Commander of the Army or the Region.

Should there be a threat that the aeroplane will be put back into operation, use violence to stop it leaving, by either breaking the tail of the aeroplane or a wheel.

The aeroplane must be preserved intact until the arrival of the competent Military Authorities.

Army Headquarters, 22 April 1916



HIGH TIDE OF THE GERMAN ADVANCE

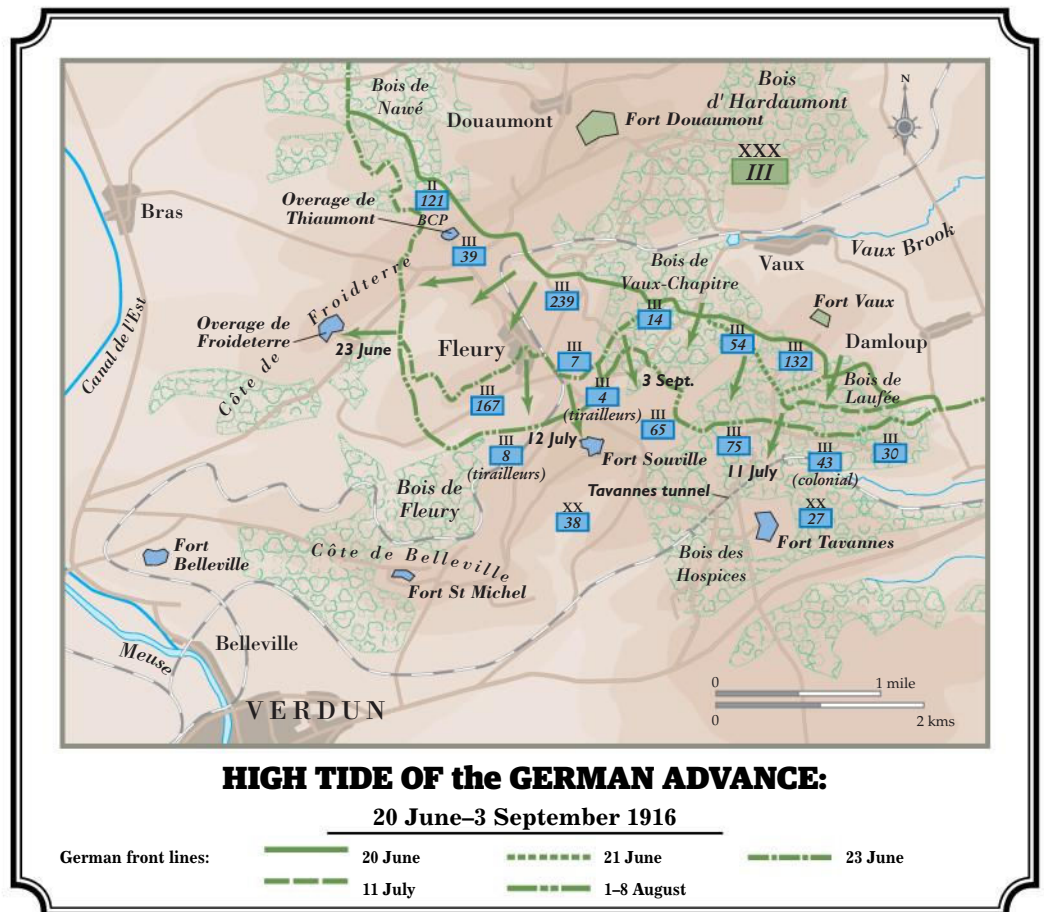
Knobelsdorf's Last Throw

FRI 23 JUN – WED 12 JUL

With Fort Vaux taken, the last barrier standing between the Germans and Verdun was Fort Souville, two and a half miles from the city and with no defences of consequence in between. Knobelsdorf gave orders for a big punch to take Verdun. First, two positions dominating the approaches to Souville had to be taken: the Ouvrage de Thiaumont and the village of Fleury. Thiaumont was captured on 8 June and subsequently changed hands no less than 14 times.

The fall of Fort Vaux caused a major crisis in the French government, where concern over morale in the army was mounting. Thanks to costly counter-attacks, divisions were being used up at a rate of two every three days. Two officers were executed for precipitating the headlong retreat of the 347th Regiment, which had been holding a position to the right of the Ouvrage de Thiaumont, and retreated on 8 June, having been reduced to six officers and some 350 soldiers. Deputy and ex-sergeant Maginot, wounded at Verdun, criticised GQG and, by inference, Joffre, in the Chamber of Deputies. The strain on Pétain, squeezed between the impetuous Nivelle and the icy, uncaring Joffre, was beginning to show. Crisis point had been reached

On 22 June, German shells began falling on French artillery positions, bursting with a pop rather than a bang, followed by a vile pungent





General Schmidt von Knobelsdorf

As Chief of Staff German Fifth Army (the Crown Prince's command), Knobelsdorf later claimed that if he had known that Falkenhayn's true intention at Verdun was to embark on a long-drawn-out war of attrition, he would never have supported the plan. A chief of staff in the German army had immense power, could issue orders on his own initiative without reference to his master, and was deemed directly responsible for decisions he made. In the British and French armies, a chief of staff spoke on behalf of his commander.

smell. It was phosgene gas, known as "Green Cross" after the markings seen painted on the shells. This was its first use against the French, and it was designed to defeat the French gas masks (the British had already experienced phosgene on 19 December 1915). By dawn on 23 June, very few French guns were still firing.

The main German attack came between the 129th and 13th French Divisions, punching a deep hole in their line. At the spearhead were the 2nd Prussian Jägers of von Dellmensingen's Alpine Corps, whose adjutant, Lieutenant Paulus, would be the German commander at Stalingrad in the next war. The fighting in Fleury lasted all day, and by evening the village was in German hands. They were only two and a half miles from Verdun, just 1,200 yards from the Côte de Belleville (the final ridge before the city) and less than 1,000 yards from Souville.

But although the French line was badly dented, it held. The Germans could make no further progress. There were several reasons for this. Perhaps most importantly, the attack was on too narrow a front. Although the phosgene gas had produced shock and chaos among the French artillery, their gas masks actually worked better than expected. Most of the gas settled in hollows, so gun crews on higher ground were less affected. Because the Germans switched from "Green Cross" to high-explosive shells too early in the fire-plan, some of the French artillery had time to recover from the effects of the gas. French air superiority also played an important part in

ensuring artillery that could still fire was accurately directed.

Knobelsdorf knew that his last throw had failed: French resistance was stiffening; the counter-attacks would soon begin; there were insufficient "Green Cross" shells for another push; and the German troops were bone-weary and plagued by thirst. The Kaiser, who was brought forward to witness the triumph, slunk back to his headquarters. The colours and bands, positioned for the expected victory march into Verdun, were returned to the regimental depots.

Predictably, Mangin, now in command of the whole of the right bank, hurled in no less than eight furious counter-attacks, with nothing to show for them but heavy casualties. In one fruitless attack on Fleury, one of his battalions lost 13 out of 14 officers.

The fighting here was to sway to and fro until 6 September, but "Green Cross" was never so effective again thanks to a new French gas mask that was in fact designed well before the first phosgene attack. On 12 July, a small group from the German 140th Regiment, cut off from their unit, stood on the top of Fort Souville, the spires of Verdun and the Meuse glinting in the valley below. Led by Lieutenant Dupuy, the remnants of the Souville garrison routed the Germans, who never returned. The German high-water-mark had been reached momentarily; their advance ebbed, and then paused.

By now, Falkenhayn had another matter to engage his attention: the battle of the Somme.



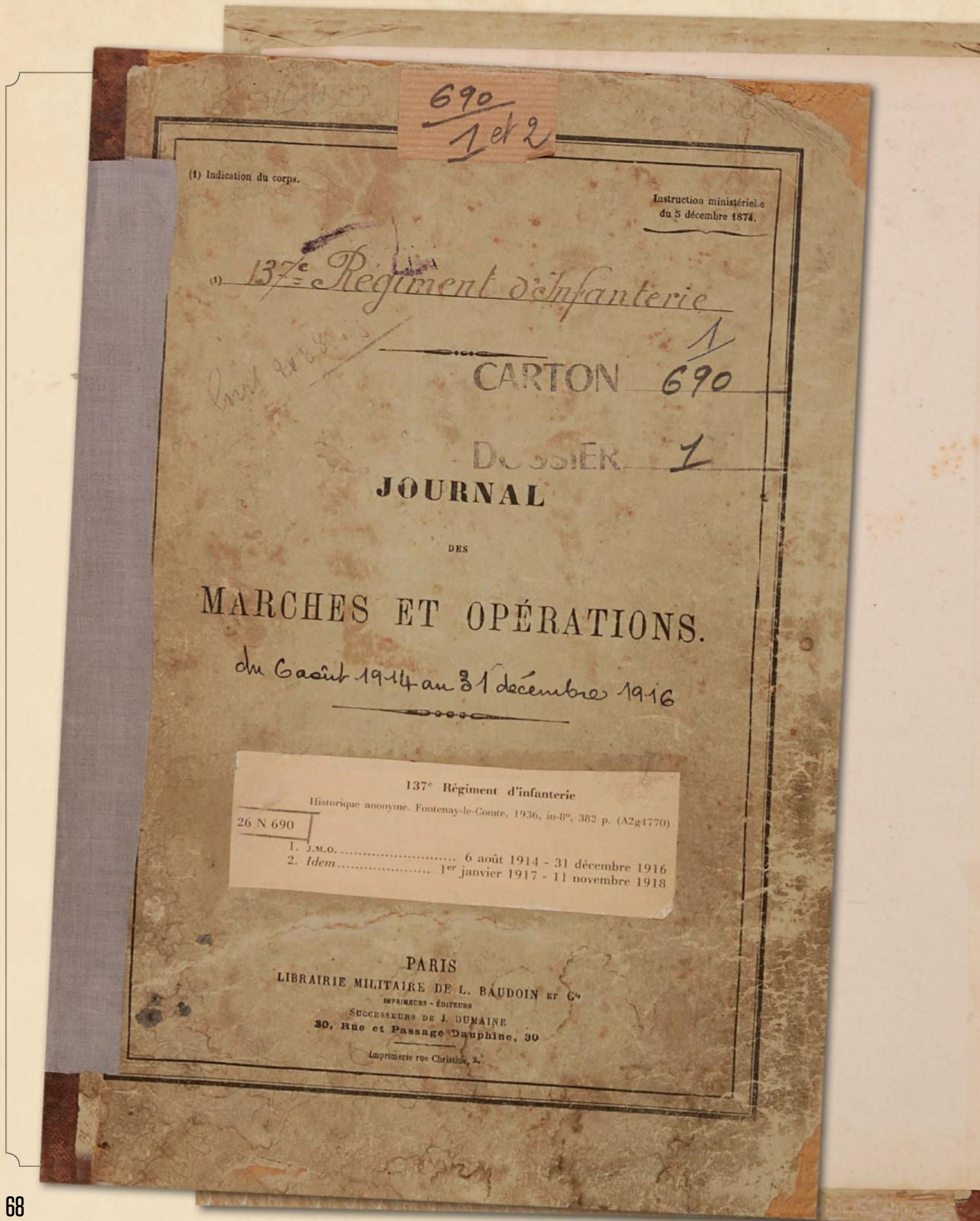
A German corpse at Fleury, where both sides suffered very heavy casualties



ABOVE: Shoulder strap of the 2nd Prussian Jäger Regiment

BELOW: German soldier's identity disc, found on the Verdun battlefield





(1) Indication du corps.

Instruction ministérielle
du 5 décembre 1874.

(1) *137^e* Régiment d'Infanterie

CARTON *690*

DOSSIER *1*

JOURNAL

DES

MARCHES ET OPÉRATIONS.

du 6 août 1914 au 31 décembre 1916

137^e Régiment d'infanterie

Historique anonyme. Fontenay-le-Comte, 1936, in-8°, 382 p. (A2g4770)

26 N 690

1. J.M.O. 6 août 1914 - 31 décembre 1916
2. Idem 1^{er} janvier 1917 - 11 novembre 1918

PARIS

LIBRAIRIE MILITAIRE DE L. BAUDOUIN ET C^o

IMPRIMEURS - ÉDITEURS

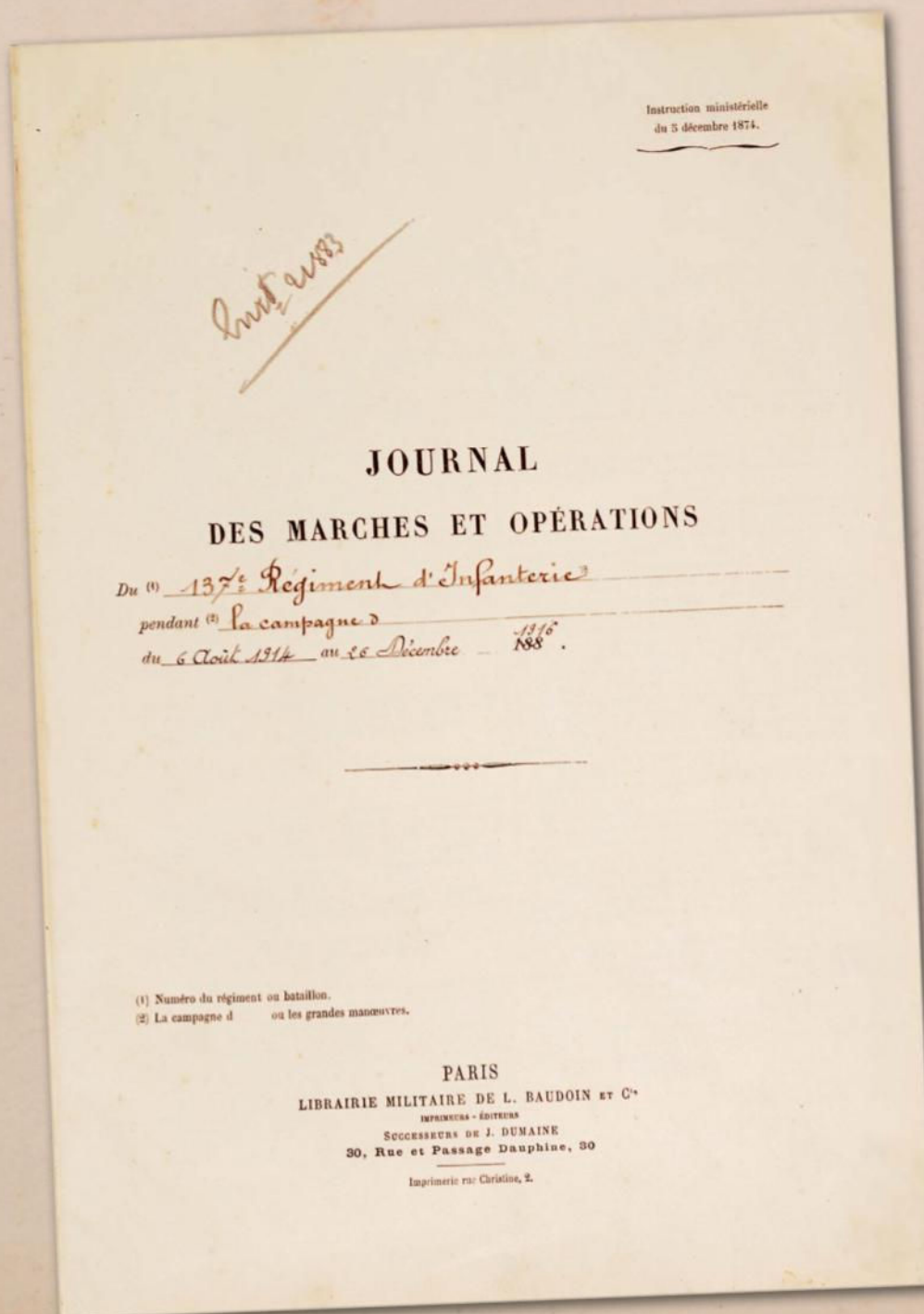
SUCCESSIONS DE J. DUMAINE

30, Rue et Passage Dauphine, 30

Imprimerie rue Christine, 2.

ITEM 16

The Official handwritten war diary of the French 137th Infantry Regiment for 9 and 10 June. Its 3rd Company passed into legend when, after the war was over, their trench in the Ravine de la Dame was discovered with a line of bayonets sticking up out of the earth. The company had been wiped out on 10 June, and many of the bodies were discovered buried in the trench below their bayonets. The Trench of Bayonets ("Tranchée des Baïonnettes") has been preserved as a battlefield monument.



(1) Numéro du régiment ou bataillon.
(2) La campagne d ou les grandes manœuvres.

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE MILITAIRE DE L. BAUDOUIN ET C^{ie}
IMPRIMERIE - ÉDITEURS
SUCCESSIONS DE J. DUMAIN
30, Rue et Passage Dauphine, 30
Imprimerie rue Christian, 2.

9 June

- Command post of the brigade commander in the Fleury Ravine.

- The Sixth Company performs this movement in small fractions and extends to the left facing the north of the fifth company on the north-western slopes of the Ravin de la Dame.

- The company seeks in vain for a link with elements of the 293rd in the direction of the Ravin de la Dame.

10 June

1916

DATE.

HISTORIQUE DES FAITS.

- P.C. du Coll. de la Bde dans le Bassin de Flussy
- Coll. Flussy, lui donne comme Cdr.: "et maintenant
la 5^e Co où elle est, en se prolongeant à gauche par une
autre Cr.^{te} qui s'engage dans la Cr.^{te} de la vallée de la rive
mout - Flussy, aux abords du Défilé que est le la nuit.
ce des Bassins des Rognes - (il faut).

- La 6^e C^{te} exécute ce mouvement par petites fractions et vient prolonger à gauche, face au N. la 5^e C^{te} sur le pont de la N.O. du Bassin de la Dame.

- Elle est accueillie par une canonnade assez violente et des feux de ^{artillerie} ~~artillerie~~, mais les pertes sont néanmoins légères (placée à 176, 75). -

— Elle cherché vainement une liaison avec les éléments du 238^e dans la direction de Ravin de la Dame.—

- Le Bte. Douet et la 8^e H. R. alertés à 19 h., quittent la Citadelle à 20 h. pour se porter au Bois des Signes.

10. Juin. -

L'Colonel arrive à Munich dans la nuit du 9 au 10. au P.C. 119., rend compte qu'il a la libération des Buis à 12. lever sur la contre-fuite du Ravin de la Dame à l'E. de la ferme de Biaumont, lui amène des plus critiques, dominée de tous les côtés et le plan doit découvrir sur une distance d'environ 400 m.; que les liaisons sont très déficientes - lignes téléphoniques très mal installées - que l'observation et la liaison d'Etat. sont très insuffisantes - celle-ci consistant essentiellement dans les fusées et un pool optique à 119.

- La relève qui devait se faire dans la nuit du 9 au 10 ne peut avoir lieu par suite de retards.

— Le Colonel prescrit le redressement face au N. E. des 5 et 6^{es} pour boucher en partie la trouée au S. de la borne de Thiémont.

- Les Cuis redressés doivent s'organiser, et se distendre dans les
horis d'obus, afin de pouvoir tenir, pendant le jour, sur leurs
positions. - Ce mouvement est exécuté par le 1^{er} escad. i. b.

jour. - La liaison est obtenue vaguement avec de petits éléments du 23^e dans le Ravin de la Dame (jour 22).

- Pendant la journée du 10, les 6^{es} se tiennent dissimulées et la journée est assez calme.

- El 0430 le Btm. Douglas, à gauche le Btm. Robert
du 293^e (5^e Btm.)

Al. 1830. le Bte Droux relie à droite le Bte Barbotte
du 337^e (5^e Bte).

- the colonel advises regrouping to the north-east and the 5th and 6th companies to partially fill the gap south of the Ferme de Thiaumont.

DATES.

-11. Juin.

HISTORIQUE DES FAITS.

Le B^{tn} du 403^e (Lorillot) dont les éléments les plus avancés sont aux abords de l'ouvrage de Thiaumont est mis à la disposition du Colonel qui prescrit qu'au cours de la nuit, les B^{tns} Gaugeat et Lorillot s'établiront face au N.E. à cheval sur la crête 360, accolés et articulés en profondeur.

- 3^e Co^{mp} en 1^{re} ligne, 2^e Co^{mp} en renfort, les 4^e et 5^e Co^{mp} sur la ligne en flanclement.

- Les B^{tns} se retrancheront sans hâse régulière, de façon à pouvoir maintenir leurs positions pendant le jour sans être repérés par l'Art.

- Le B^{tn} Gaugeat doit se mettre en liaison à droite avec le 403^e B^{tn}.

- Le B^{tn} Lorillot cherchera à relier, à gauche avec les éléments de 2^e ligne, du B^{tn} Deneuf au S.O. de la ferme de Thiaumont.

- Le mouvement doit commencer par la droite qui se portera au N. de l'Abri 320.

- 3 sections de M^{ts}, installées sous la protection de ces premiers éléments de droite, doivent tenir les pontes jusqu'à la crête 360, sous leurs feux, pour protéger le mouvement et le travail de la nuit.

- 1 section de M^{ts} du 403^e fait le même office à l'aile gauche.

- Au cours de la nuit, des renseignements provenant de prisonniers, font savoir qu'une attaque va être déclanchée dans la nuit même, ou au petit jour.

- Les B^{tns} en sont avertis et reçoivent l'ordre de se tenir en état d'alerte, qu'ils aient avancé leur organisation.

- La liaison, du 403^e avec le B^{tn} Deneuf est réalisée par de faibles postes qui ne peuvent se retenir, et se replient au petit jour.

- Les 8^e et 9^e Co^{mp} ne dépassent pas la crête : Ouvrage de Thiaumont - Fleury.

- Le mouvement et l'installation sont terminés au petit jour.

- A partir de 10 h., et jusqu'à 19 h. : violent bombardement ; d'abord sur les B^{tns} Gaugeat, Lorillot et la Région plus au S., puis à partir de midi sur les B^{tns} Deneuf et Dreux.

- Les B^{tns} Gaugeat et Lorillot perdent environ 20 % de leur effectif, les B^{tns} Deneuf et Dreux 50 % et 30 %
(Rapport d'un officier envoyé en liaison 2^e nuit du 11 au 12) -

- The regrouped companies need to organize and hide in shellholes so as to dig into their positions during the day. This movement is performed by the 6th Company before daybreak. - Liaison is vaguely established with small elements of the 293rd in the Ravin de la Dame (1st company).

- During the day of the 10th, the companies remain hidden and the day is quite quiet.

Document continues...

11 June

The 403rd (Lorillot) battalion whose most advanced elements are at the edge of the Thiaumont breastworks is placed at the colonel's disposal who advises that during the night, the Gaugeat and Lorillot battalions should establish themselves alongside each other and articulate in depth facing north-eastwards across ridge 360 :-

- two companies in the front line, two companies as reinforcements, with the machine guns flanking them in the front line.

- they will retrench without forming a regular line so as to be able to maintain their positions during the day without being spotted by the artillery.

Document continues...

- During the night, information provided by prisoners indicates that an attack will be launched that very night or at first light.-

- the battalions are warned and receive the order to dig in on a state of alert, their organisation being more advanced.

- the liaison of the 403rd with the Deneuf battalion is achieved through weak posts that cannot retrench and fall back at first light.

- the 7th and 8th companies do not move beyond the ridge:

- Thiaumont breastworks - Fleury

- the movement and works are completed

by daybreak.

- From 10.00 to 19.00, there is a violent bombardment, firstly of the Gaugeat and Lorillot battalion and the regions further to the south, then from midday, of the Deneuf and Breux battalions.-

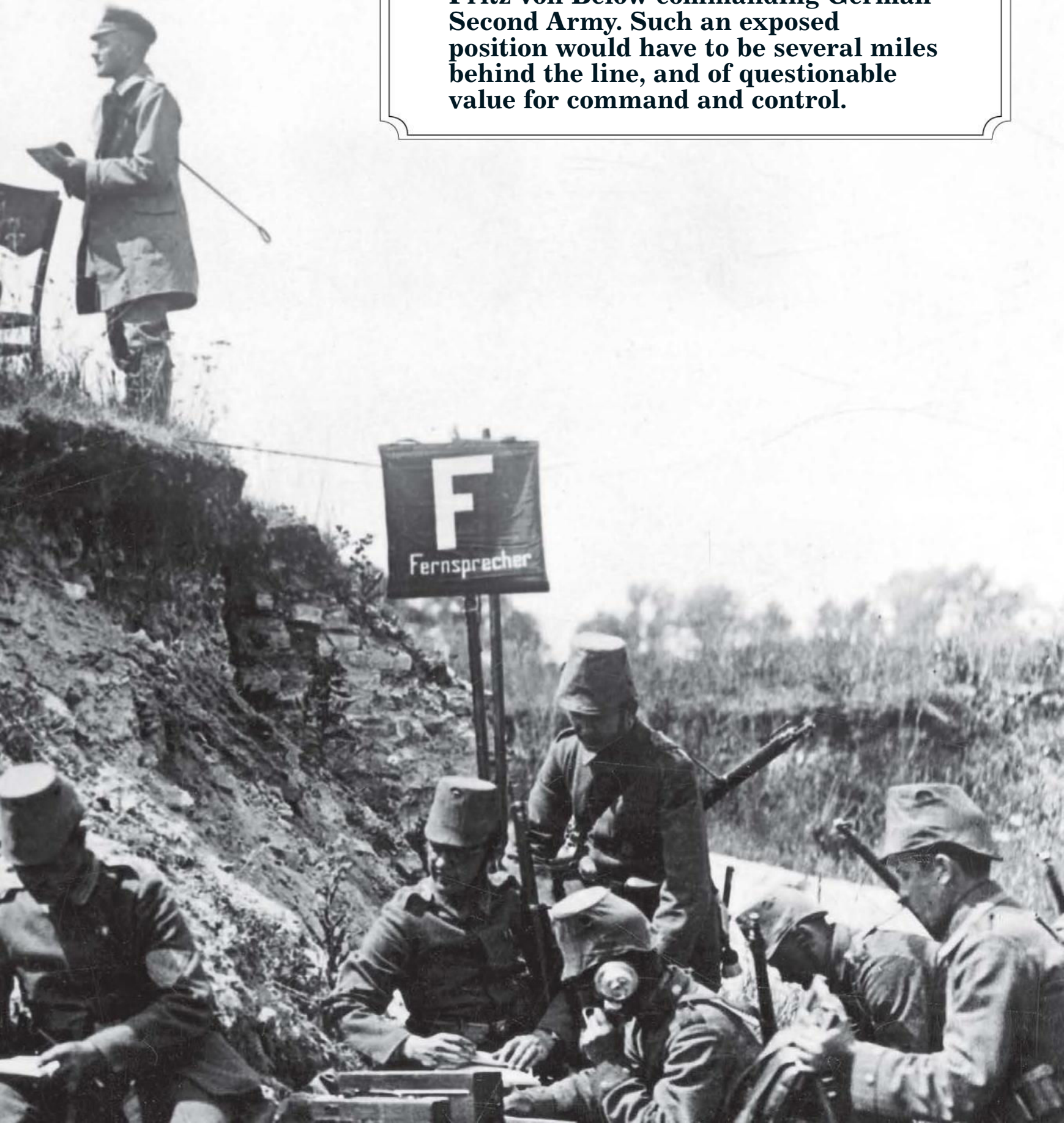
- The Gaugeat and Lorillot battalions lose about 20% of their men, the Deneuf and Dreux battalions lose 50% and 30%.

- (Report from a liaison officer sent in the night of the 11th and 12th)





Forward command post of General Fritz von Below commanding German Second Army. Such an exposed position would have to be several miles behind the line, and of questionable value for command and control.



WHY THE SOMME?

The Big Push

In the aftermath of the Chantilly Conference, held at GQG on 6 December 1915, Joffre proposed a great Franco-British offensive on a 60-mile front athwart the Somme. Joffre also asked Haig to mount a large wearing-down attack on a 20,000-yard front somewhere north of the Somme. It was to start in April, followed by another on a similar scale during May. Haig raised objections to the wearing-down attacks, but on 14 February, in accordance with his unvarying principle of meeting French wishes whenever possible, he agreed to take part in the combined offensive. A week later the Germans upset the apple cart by attacking at Verdun.

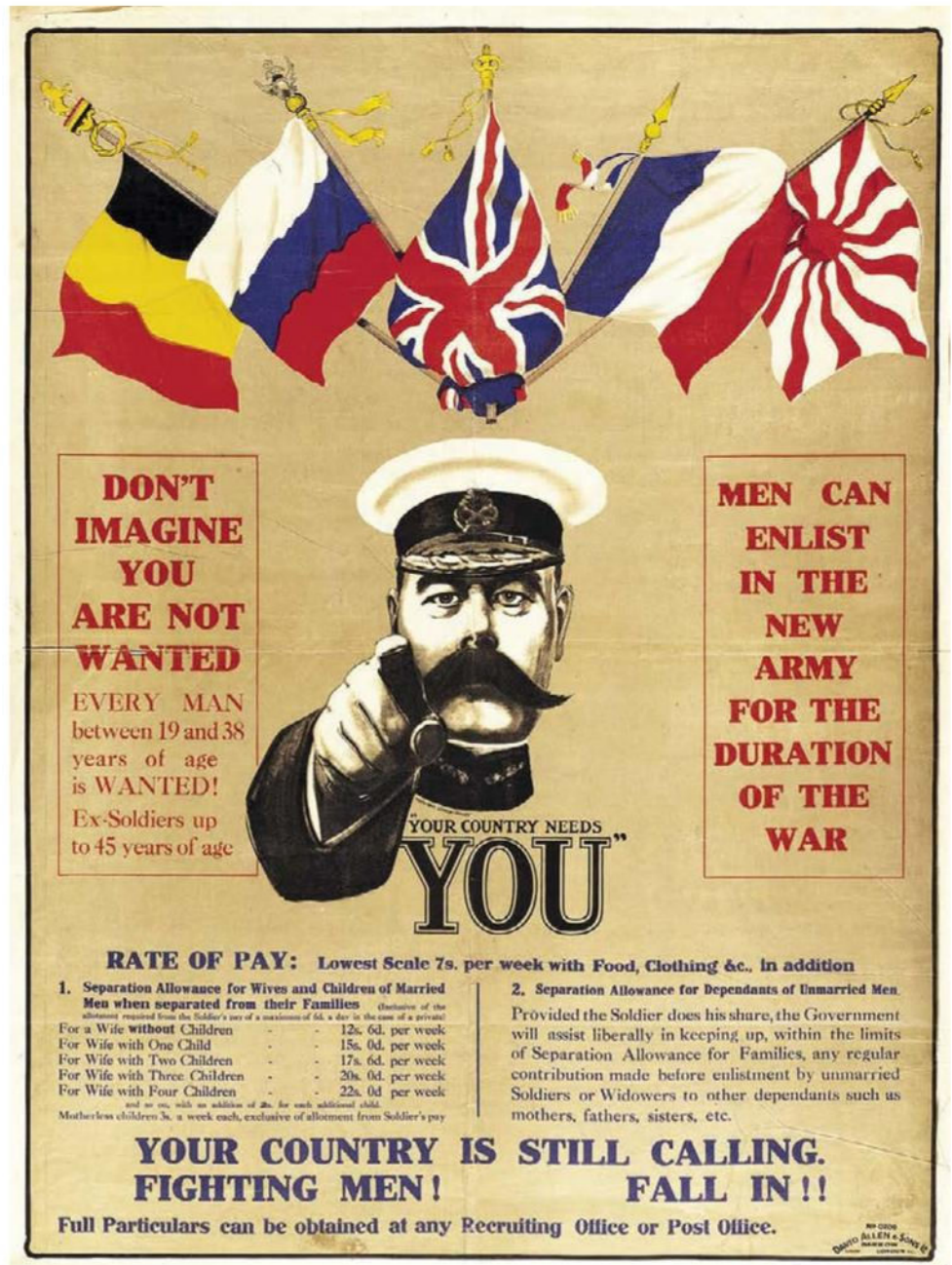
The Somme was not a very good place to attack. The chalky soil was ideal for digging deep defensive positions. The British axis of attack on the “belly” of a German salient might just push back the salient – which is what did happen. Even if a breakthrough could be achieved, it risked leading nowhere. Haig had a better idea, which he considered had worthwhile strategic objectives. He told General Sir Herbert Plumer, in command of British Second Army, to prepare for an offensive at Messines, with a secondary hook along the coast to be supported by the Navy. It was a plan that if carried out in 1916, would have

RIGHT: One of Field Marshal Lord Kitchener’s recruiting posters



Lieutenant General Sir Henry Rawlinson

Rawlinson was the first army commander to be appointed under Haig, having led all IV Corps’s attacks in Haig’s First Army in 1915. He favoured “bite and hold” attacks on the Somme, but Haig overruled him. His piecemeal attacks in July and August 1916, with inadequate force on narrow frontages, were costly. Sidelined for most of 1917 in favour of Gough’s Fifth Army, his Fourth Army led the Allied counter-attack in 1918, including the major defeat of the Germans at Amiens in August.



**DON'T
IMAGINE
YOU
ARE NOT
WANTED**

**EVERY MAN
between 19 and 38
years of age
is WANTED!**

**Ex-Soldiers up
to 45 years of age**

**YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS
YOU**

**MEN CAN
ENLIST
IN THE
NEW
ARMY
FOR THE
DURATION
OF THE
WAR**

RATE OF PAY: Lowest Scale 7s. per week with Food, Clothing &c. In addition

1. Separation Allowance for Wives and Children of Married Men when separated from their Families (Exclusive of the allowance required from the Soldier's pay of a maximum of 6d. a day in the case of a private)

For a Wife without Children	12s. 6d. per week
For Wife with One Child	15s. 0d. per week
For Wife with Two Children	17s. 6d. per week
For Wife with Three Children	20s. 0d. per week
For Wife with Four Children	22s. 0d. per week

and so on, with an addition of 2s. for each additional child.

Motherless children 5s. a week each, exclusive of allowance from Soldier's pay

2. Separation Allowance for Dependents of Unmarried Men.

Provided the Soldier does his share, the Government will assist liberally in keeping up, within the limits of Separation Allowance for Families, any regular contribution made before enlistment by unmarried Soldiers or Widowers to other dependants such as mothers, fathers, sisters, etc.

**YOUR COUNTRY IS STILL CALLING.
FIGHTING MEN!
FALL IN!!**

Full Particulars can be obtained at any Recruiting Office or Post Office.

NO 1220
DAVID ALLEN & SONS LTD
LONDON

stood a good chance of success. The defences there were not so formidable as they were to be in 1917; few concrete pill boxes had been built, and Haig intended to wait for the promised tanks. But it was not to be. Joffre pressed for the Somme offensive, and, with the French under such pressure at Verdun, Haig had to accede.

It is now clear that Joffre had in mind an attritional battle. Like Loos in 1915, the battle was fought on ground and at a time chosen by the French. The date agreed for the offensive was 1 July. The enemy was not caught unawares, however, except at one point.

“I am not under General Joffre’s orders, but that would make no difference, as my intention was to do my utmost to carry out General Joffre’s wishes on strategical matters, as if they were orders” – General Sir Douglas Haig to Colonel des Vallières, the French liaison officer at Haig’s HQ

Haig's design for the battle was ambitious. First, Rawlinson's Fourth Army was to capture enemy positions on a line from Serre to Montauban. To its left, Allenby's Third Army would attack Gommecourt as a diversion. In phase two, Fourth Army would punch to the left to capture the German second line from the River Ancre to Pozières, and then attack to the right, south of the Albert-Bapaume road, followed by a push on to the third German line, which included Le Sars, Flers and Morval. At this point Gough's Reserve Army – with three cavalry divisions – would exploit east and north towards Arras. General Fayolle's French Sixth Army, part of General Foch's Army Group North, would attack to Rawlinson's right.

Fourth Army had 1,010 field guns and howitzers, 182 heavy guns, and 245 heavy howitzers. The gunners' tasks were to cut the barbed wire with shrapnel, destroy the German trenches and to hit the enemy artillery (a tactic known as counter-battery). There was insufficient artillery, especially heavy guns. Shrapnel did not always cut wire effectively, but until instantaneous fuses for high-explosive (HE) shells became available in 1917, it would have to do.

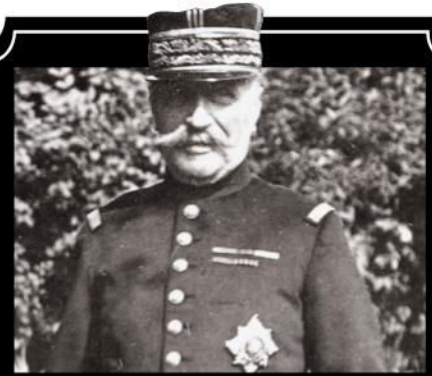
War in 1914 had found Britain totally unprepared for large-scale land operations. By November, her small regular army had suffered

severe losses; drawing in millions of civilian volunteers there then followed a ten-fold expansion of the BEF over the next 18 months. None of the senior generals, from Haig downwards, had commanded in battle at the level they would experience on the Somme. Raising the all-volunteer Kitchener "new armies" (so named after Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War) was a remarkable achievement. But this was only the beginning, for to be of any use armies must be trained, and until they are equipped they cannot train. Until enough guns were manufactured, for example, gunners had to train with logs. Many gunners fired at practice camp for the first time only weeks before going to the Front in 1916.

In every arm of the new armies, only the most elementary training could be achieved until the factories were able to turn out the appropriate weapons, ammunition and kit.

It takes time, moreover, to train an army as a team. A collection of individuals, however enthusiastic and patriotic, is not an army. The professional BEF of 1918 would be forged in the fires of the Somme.

Few of the men who filed into the trenches on the days before 1 July were aware of these deficiencies. For them, this was the "big push" that would end the war.



General Ferdinand Foch

Foch commanded French Army Group North in 1916, which included the Somme sector. A man of enormous energy and intellectually bright, he was wrongly seen as an advocate of the "attack at all costs" school. His career stalled after Joffre's removal on 15 December 1916, but he returned as Chief of Staff French Army after the fiasco of the Nivelle offensive in May 1917. In 1918 he became Allied Commander in Chief in all but name, an appointment supported by Haig. He took the German surrender at Compiègne on 11 November 1918.



ABOVE: Filling shells in a British factory. By 1916 large numbers of women were working in armament factories



ABOVE: A British 15-inch howitzer being prepared for action. Its high-explosive shell weighed 1,400 pounds, and it had a range of nearly 11,000 yards

BELOW: Major General Beauvoir de Lisle, GOC 29th Division, addressing the 1st Battalion, The Lancashire Fusiliers on 29 June 1916, before their 1 July attack at Beaumont Hamel



ITEM 17

Haig's secret 1 June letter to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir William Robertson, reporting on the Allied conference at Amiens. It confirms that he would launch the Somme offensive to relieve pressure on the French at Verdun.

O.A.D. 948.

SECRET.

2

*3 copies made.
not despatched
2. Record
3. Cmb.*

The Chief of the
Imperial General Staff.

1st June, 1916.

1. I have the honour to inform you, for the information of His Majesty's Government, that I yesterday attended a Conference near Amiens presided over by M. Poincaré, President of the Republic, at which M. Briand, Generals Joffre, Castelnau and Foch, and the French Minister for War were also present.

2. In the course of discussion, M. Poincaré informed me that he had recently visited VERDUN and that the three senior Generals on the spot (Generals Pétain, Nivelle and *another*) were of opinion that VERDUN would be captured by the enemy unless early action were taken to draw off the pressure from that point of our front. General Pétain mentioned 25th June as the date up to which he could hold on. General Joffre was of opinion that the place could be held for longer, certainly until the beginning of July.

3. Under these circumstances and in view of the authority given in your letters No. 01/14/54, of the 9th and 10th April, and of the agreement arrived at on the 27th May, at a conference held at BEAUQUESNE, when you were present, I am preparing to take part in offensive operations with the French, with the object of relieving the pressure on VERDUN.

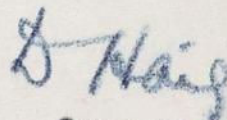
4.

4. It was further stated at the conference yesterday that, owing to the continuation of the offensive by the enemy against VERDUN, the number of divisions which the French would have available for offensive operations were diminishing in number, and that "one ought to foresee the case in which the English Army must alone undertake the offensive."

5. In these circumstances, I beg strongly to recommend that every available division be brought to France (from SALONIKA) with a view to supporting the forthcoming operations which I propose to carry out on the lines stated in paragraph 4 of my letter No. O.A.D. 679, dated the 4th April, and which are likely to be of a prolonged nature.

6. With reference to paragraph 4 above, I should add that General Joffre assured me that the greatest efforts would be made to support the British attack with every available French division and gun.

(Sd)


General,
Commanding-in-Chief,
British Armies in France.

FIRST DAY IN THE NORTH

Zero Hour North of the Somme

SAT 01 JUL

At 7.30 am, the roar of the barrage ceased, as guns were re-laid on targets further back. Amid the silence, the soldiers in the trenches could hear birdsong. It was Zero Hour; in response to the officers' whistle blasts, the infantry of two British armies and one French began to advance on a 25-mile-long front.

To the north of the British Fourth Army, the 46th and 56th Divisions of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Snow's VII Corps (Third Army) attacked the strongly fortified salient at Gommecourt as an additional diversion and not part of the main assault. Here, as elsewhere, the Germans knew the British were coming. Even before Zero Hour, the British frontline area was being bombarded by German artillery. On the left, some men of the 56th Division reached the first line of German trenches, only to be counter-attacked by the German 2nd Guards Reserve Division. At 9.30pm, with ammunition exhausted, the survivors returned to their own trenches, leaving 1,300 dead behind.

Although most of the 46th Division encountered uncut wire and achieved nothing, two battalions of Sherwood Foresters got into the German first trench, and several parties of men

The 1st/14th Londons (London Scottish) marching up to take part in the 1 July 1916 attack on Gommecourt



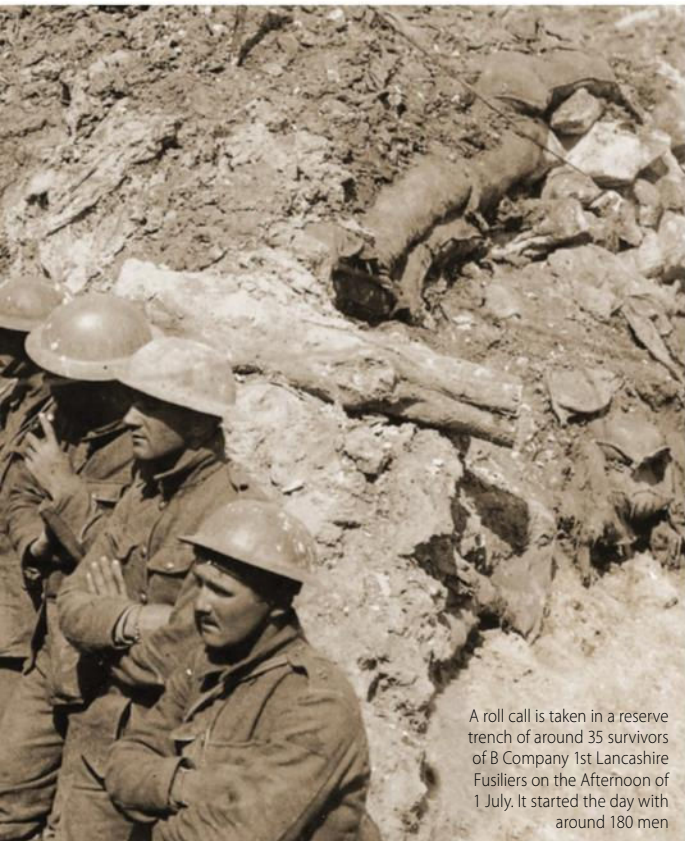
Lieutenant General Sir Aymer Hunter-Weston

Known as "Hunter-Bunter", Hunter-Weston commanded the 11th Brigade in the BEF until early 1915, then the 29th Division in the costly amphibious assault at Gallipoli, followed by VIII Corps for a while. He took over VIII Corps reconstituted in France in March 1916, which included his old division. Although Haig judged him and his Corps to be amateurs at hard fighting, clearly they had improved because, despite VIII Corps's lack of success on 1 July 1916, "Hunter-Bunter" remained in command until 1919.

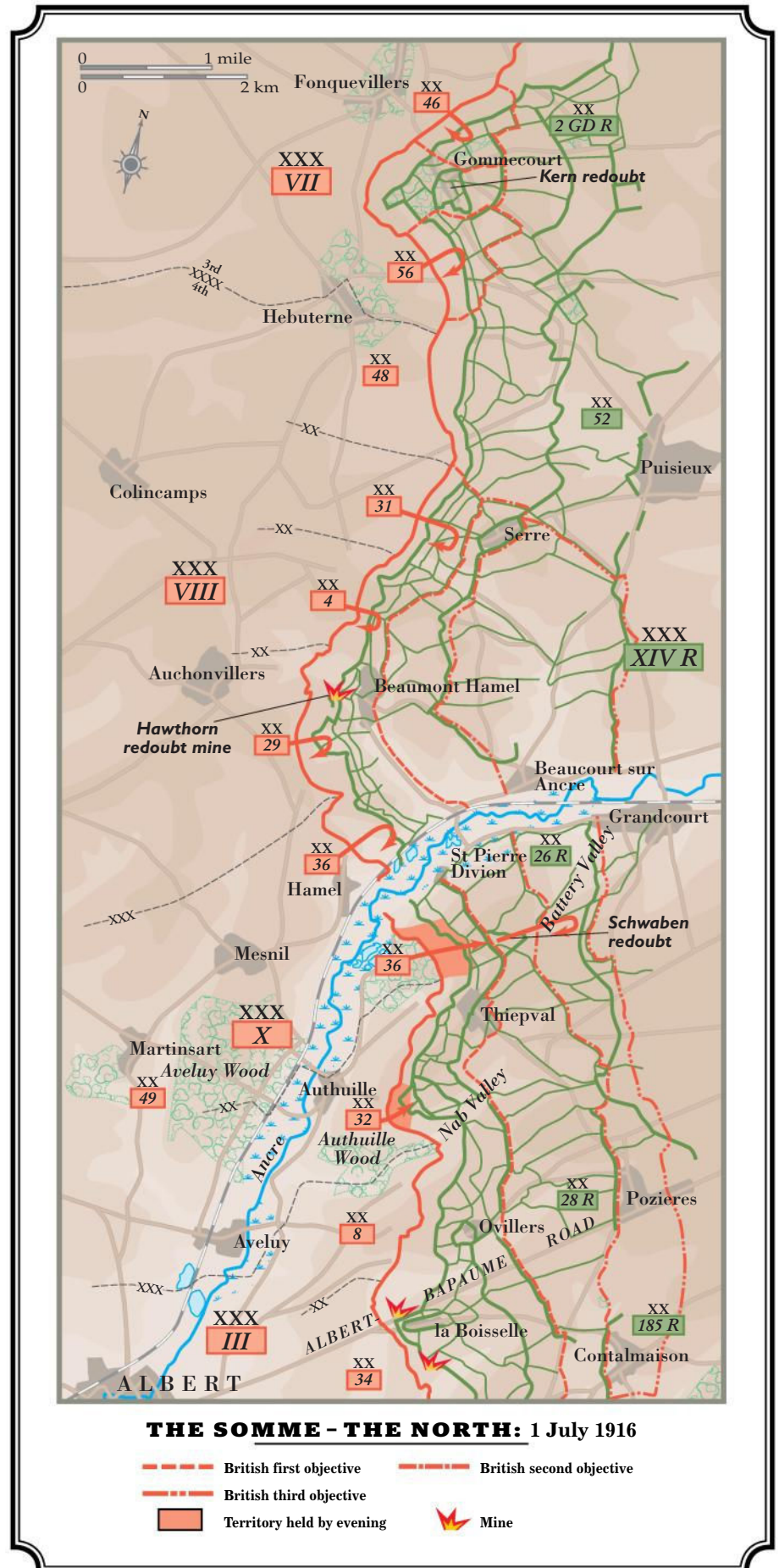




As many as 1,300 fallen men were left behind on the battlefield



A roll call is taken in a reserve trench of around 35 survivors of B Company 1st Lancashire Fusiliers on the Afternoon of 1 July. It started the day with around 180 men



as far as the second. But they failed to “mop up” pockets of enemy behind them and, surrounded and engulfed by German counter-attacks, 80 per cent of the two battalions died. A mere 31 men were taken prisoner.

The objectives of Lieutenant General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston’s VIII Corps (consisting of the 31st, 4th and 29th Divisions) included Serre and Beaumont Hamel, names that were destined to figure prominently for months to come. Before Zero Hour, the 31st Division, mostly consisting of so-called “Pals” battalions from Yorkshire, filed out through passages in their own wire. Lying in assault formation, waiting for the whistles to signal the advance, they were hit by German artillery. As they moved forward, the fire intensified, joined by machine guns when the Germans manned their trenches as soon as the British artillery lifted. The assault was smashed.

The attack in the 4th and 29th Divisions sector, including the detonation of 40,000lbs of the high-explosive ammonal under the Hawthorn Redoubt, was captured on film by official cameraman Geoffrey Malins. British infantry raced to gain possession of the resultant crater,



ABOVE 1st Lancashire Fusiliers fixing bayonets

OPPOSITE: German bodies in a shattered dugout. A still from *The Battle of the Somme*

By 1 July, British infantry usually advanced at a walk or slow trot, in linear waves, as laid down in the Fourth Army’s Tactical Notes. This is a film still from *The Battle of the Somme*, released while the battle was still in progress





but the Germans got there first. An attempt to redeem failure in the 29th Division's sector cost the 1st Newfoundland Regiment 710 casualties, including all its officers. VIII Corps lost 14,000 men to 1,214 German casualties.

Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Morland's X Corps attacked the fortified village of Thiepval and the Schwaben Redoubt with two divisions attacking side by side. On the left, the 36th (Ulster) Division fired up by attacking on the anniversary (by the old Julian calendar) of the Battle of the Boyne, disobeyed instructions and crept forward under cover of the British barrage to within 100 yards of the German positions. At 7.30am, with bugles sounding, they jumped into the German trenches, catching the enemy infantry emerging from dugouts. By 9.15am, some of the Ulstermen, within 100 yards of Grandcourt, the divisional objective, were being hit by their own artillery, which wasn't due to lift until 10.10am. With German artillery fire preventing reserves moving to their support, the division's position became untenable.

The 32nd Division, which had also moved forward before their own barrage lifted, enjoyed a brief period of success, until they were cut to pieces by machine-gun fire from flanking strongpoints. X Corps suffered over 9,000 casualties, with more than half of these in the 36th Division.



LEFT: The 1st Battalion The Newfoundland Regiment composed entirely of native-born Newfoundlanders, and annihilated on 1 July 1916 at Beaumont Hamel, served in France for the rest of the war. 4,984 Newfoundlanders served with the BEF; 1,232 were killed, 2,314 were wounded and 174 were taken prisoner

RIGHT: At 7.30am officers' whistles sent thousands of British troops "Over the Top"



Captain E. Bell VC

When the attack on Thiepval was halted by a German machine gun, Bell, 9th Inniskilling Fusiliers, attached 109th Light Trench Mortar Battery, 36th (Ulster) Division, crept forward and shot the gunner. Subsequent bombing parties were unable to progress, and Bell went forward alone three times and cleared enemy trenches with trench mortar bombs. He then stood on the parapet firing at counter-attacking enemy. He was killed while rallying and reorganising groups of infantry that had lost their officers.

ITEM 18

Percy G. Boswell's letter to his father, written on the day before the attack. Boswell, a Second Lieutenant with the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, was killed on 1 July.

30.6.16
B.E.F.

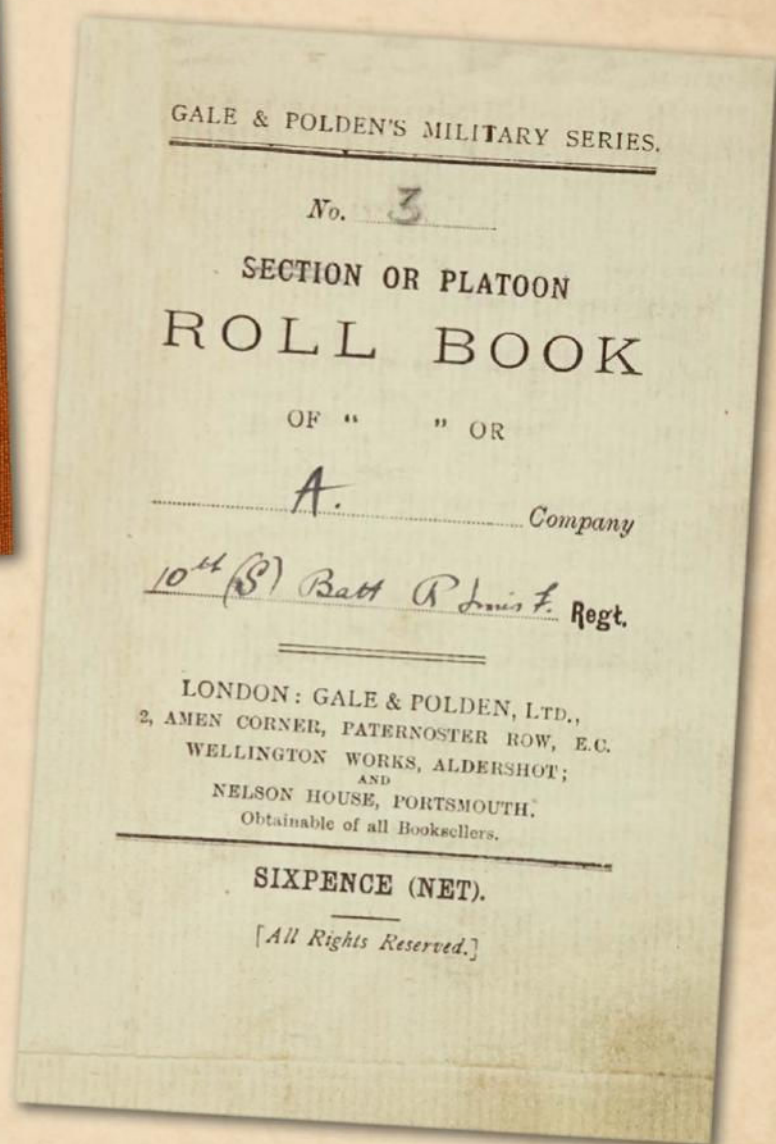
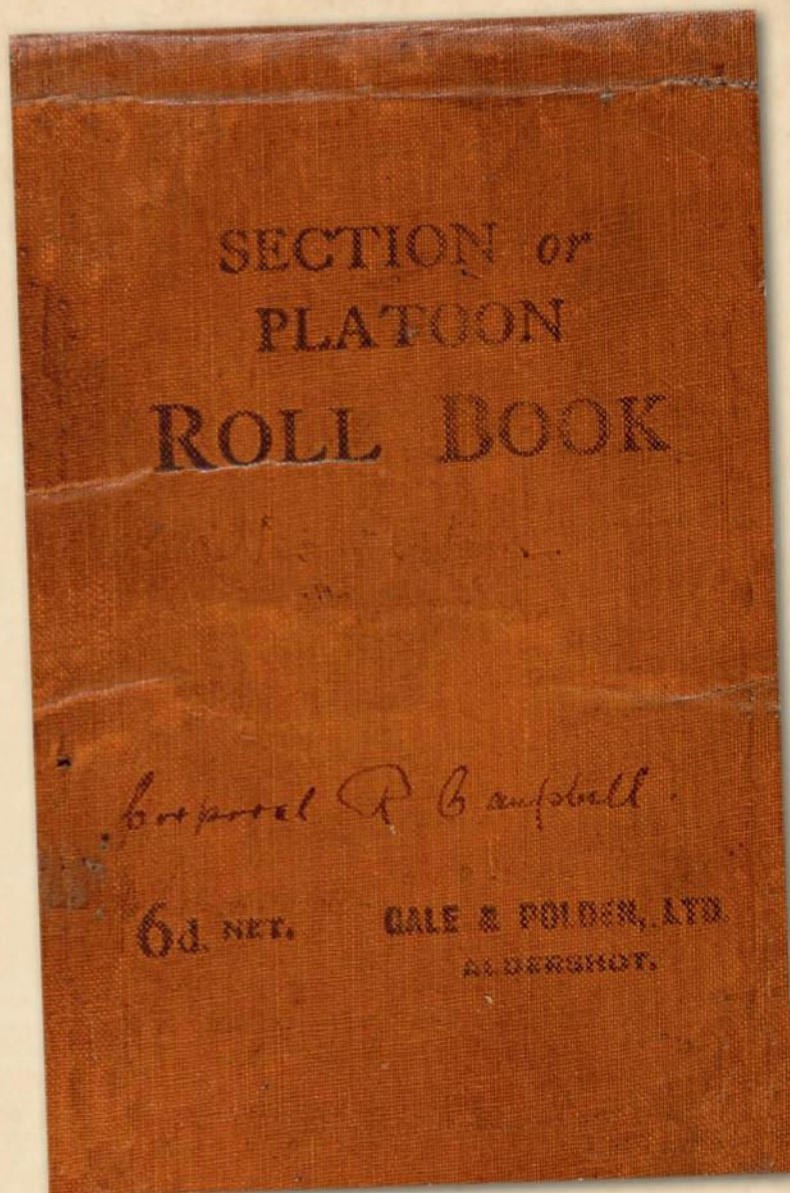
Dear Father,

I am just writing you a short note which you will receive only if anything has happened to me during the next few days. The Hun is going to get consummated here just in this quarter & we are going over the parapet tomorrow when I hope to spend a few merry hours in chasing the Boche all over the place. I am absolutely certain that I shall get through all right, but in case the unexpected does happen I shall rest content with the knowledge that I have done my duty - and we can't do more.

Goodbye with the Best I have to
all from
Percy.

ITEM 19

The roll book of A Company, 10th Service Battalion, the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, showing casualties suffered on the first and subsequent days of the Somme battle.



No 11 Section.

Regtl. No.	RANK AND NAME	Married or Single	Date of Enlistment or re-enlistment of Service	Age on Enlistment	Term of Service	Religion	G. C. Badges	Class Service or Proficiency Pay	Musketry Classification	No. of Rifle	No. of Rifle Bolt	No. of Equipment
15968	Sgt Logue J.	S.	11.9.14	24		P				7	3285	7
15394	Cpl Campbell R.	S.	11.9.14	25		P				19	4218	19
15470	Cpl Dougherty R.	S.	11.9.14	19		P				41	6050	41
15428	Pte Cowan R.S.	S.	11.9.14	21		CE				94	1835	94
15592	" M ^o Martin J.	S.	15.9.14	19		P				105	3571	105
19047	" Campbell J.	S.	7.11.14	19		CE				110	5630	110

ARRANGEMENT OF BARRACK ROOMS.

BEDSTEADS.

Every man's bedstead to be immediately under the centre of his own shelf, and six inches from the wall, if the size of the room will admit of such space. The foot of the bedstead is to be doubled back or run in immediately after the bedding is made up.

BEDDING.

To be made up according to Battalion Standing Orders.

BEDS OF MEN IN HOSPITAL, DETENTION, OR ON SHORT FURLOUGH.

The beds of men who may be in hospital, in detention, or on short furlough—not exceeding a fortnight—will be considered as occupied, and, consequently, not available for the accommodation of others.

*BLACKING TIN.

The blacking tin will be placed between the boots on top of pipe-clay box.

BOARDS, INVENTORY, SCALE OF FINES FOR DRUNKENNESS, GAS NOTICES, &c.

The inventory boards, scale of fines for drunkenness, gas notices, &c., to be hung up behind the door of each room, and duty roster of orderly-men, scale of diet, and places out of bounds, also the orders and detail of duties, fatigues, &c., for the following day.

*BOOKS, WRITING MATERIAL, &c.

A few books and writing material may be kept on the shelf. In rooms where wooden shelves underneath the iron ones exist, all books and writing material may be placed upon them.

*BOOTS.

The spare boots (cleaned) will be placed underneath the bedstead, toes in line with front legs of bedstead.

*BROOMS, MOPS, AND SCRUBBERS.

The brooms, mops, and scrubbers, to be laid out neatly on the floor at the same end of table as meat dishes.

*BRUSHES (SHOE).

The shoe brushes will be placed underneath the bedstead, on top of tin of blacking.

ROLL OF No 3 Platoon Cont.

Regtl. No.	RANK AND NAME	Remarks
19076.	Pte Stirling W. J.	
19060	" Lee J.	
16860	" Warkie M.	
19512.	" Mitchell J.	
15820	" M ^o Dowell J.	
19064.	" Lambie J.	Sig.
21136	" M ^o Baines G.	Sig.
16056	" Thompson R.	Bones
21203	" Patterson J.	
15428	" Cowan R.S.	
15842	" M ^o Martin J.	
19047.	" Campbell J.	
19099.	" Angley J.	

In Possession Permit Pass	Certificates						Height	Chest	Size Boots	Size Head-dress	Trade	How Employed	Remarks
	Education	Hythe	Mtd. Inf.	Signalling	Swimming	Pay Book							
						1	5-11 39	8	12		black		Wounded 17/6
						1	5-5 36	6	7		Shut Cutter		Wounded 17/6
						1	5-7 35	8	6 1/2		Ship Wright		
						1	5-6 38	8	7		Carlier		Missing
						1	5-9 37	7	6 1/2		Lab		Wounded 4/7/16
						1	6-1 36	9	6 1/2		Lab.		

*CANS (SOUP).

The soup and water cans, filled with clean drinking water, will be placed on the table inside the meat dishes.

*CLEANING BAG.

Will be arranged according to Battalion Standing Orders.

CLOTHING.

All clothing not actually in wear, will be neatly folded and placed on the shelf.

*DISHES (MEAT).

The meat dishes will be placed upon the end of one of the tables.

CAP.

The cap, when not worn, to be placed on top of bedding, badge in front.

HAVERSACK.

The haversack to be hung on peg, according to Battalion Standing Orders.

HEAD-DRESS.

The head-dress (cased) to be placed on right of kit bag, as spectator faces it.

KIT BAG.

The kit bag to be placed flat on the shelf, immediately over centre of bedstead.

MESS TIN.

The mess tin, with cover on, to be placed on the left of the kit bag, as the spectator faces it.

NAME CARDS.

A card or brass plate, with owner's regimental No., Rank and Name, written on one side, and the word DUTY printed on the opposite side, will be hung on shelf over centre of bed.

PIPE-CLAY.

The pipe-clay box will be placed underneath the bedstead, between the boots.

POUCHES (AMMUNITION).

The ammunition Pouches will rest on iron shelf, same as worn, one on each side of centre peg, about four inches apart.

*Or as laid down in Battalion Standing Orders.

DIRECTIONS

FOR KEEPING THE ROLL BOOK.

The names of N.C.O's and Drummers to be entered in order of seniority, and those of privates, bandsmen, pioneers, etc., in alphabetical order. A space should be left after each rank of N.C.O's, and after each initial letter of privates, etc., to permit of those joining later being entered in their proper places.

When men become non-effective by death, discharge, etc., the cause and date thereof is to be noted in the Column of Remarks in the Roll, in ink, and a line drawn through their names. All casualties of a temporary nature, such as "Hospital," "Furlough," "Prison," "Detention," "Absent," etc., to be noted, in pencil, in the Column of Remarks.

FIRST DAY IN THE SOUTH

Horne Targets Fricourt

Attacking astride the Albert-Bapaume Road, III Corps's plan included the detonation of two mines, one north of La Boisselle, and the biggest, the Lochnagar mine, south of the village.

The 8th Division's advance up "Mash Valley" reached the second line, and some men even made it to the third. The 34th Division, however, failed completely except for a small group of the 16th Royal Scots who managed to reach Contalmaison, the divisional objective, before being overwhelmed. As elsewhere, reserves were unable to get forward thanks to German artillery fire. The "Big Push", both north of and including the Albert-Bapaume Road, had failed to materialise.

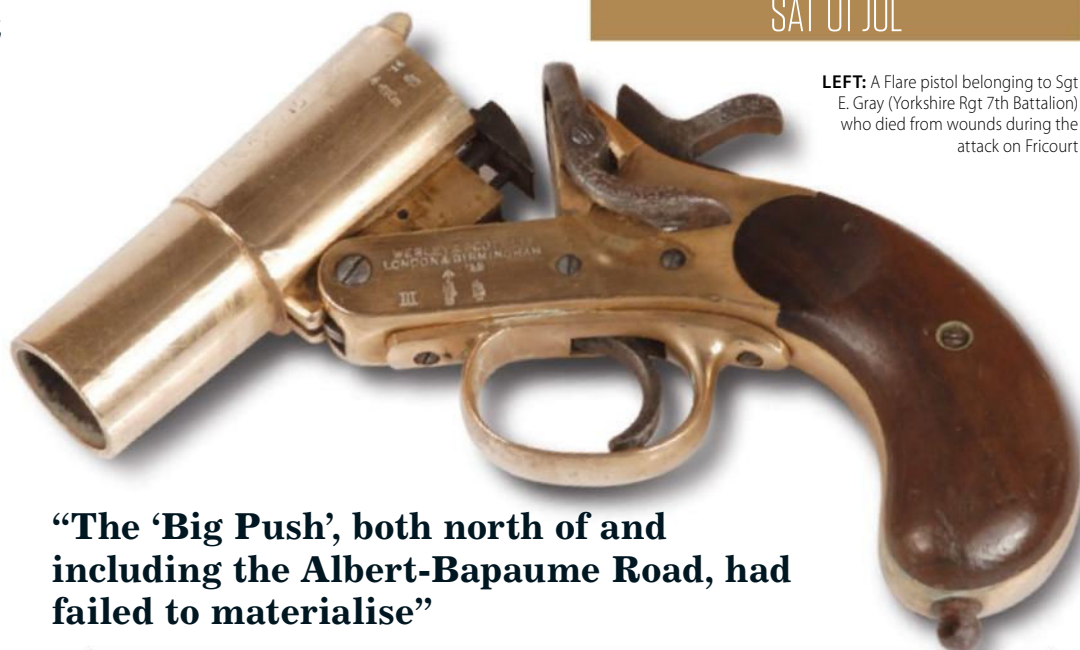
Fricourt, a heavily fortified village just within the German lines and the salient in which it lay, constituted one of the key enemy defensive positions on the Somme front, and was the objective of Lieutenant General Henry Horne's XV Corps. It was decided they would outflank the village and the heavily defended Fricourt Wood just behind it. The 21st Division would go in to the north of Fricourt, with the 50th Brigade of the 17th Division on their right, covering the village. The remainder of 19th Division was kept in reserve.



Lieutenant General Henry Horne

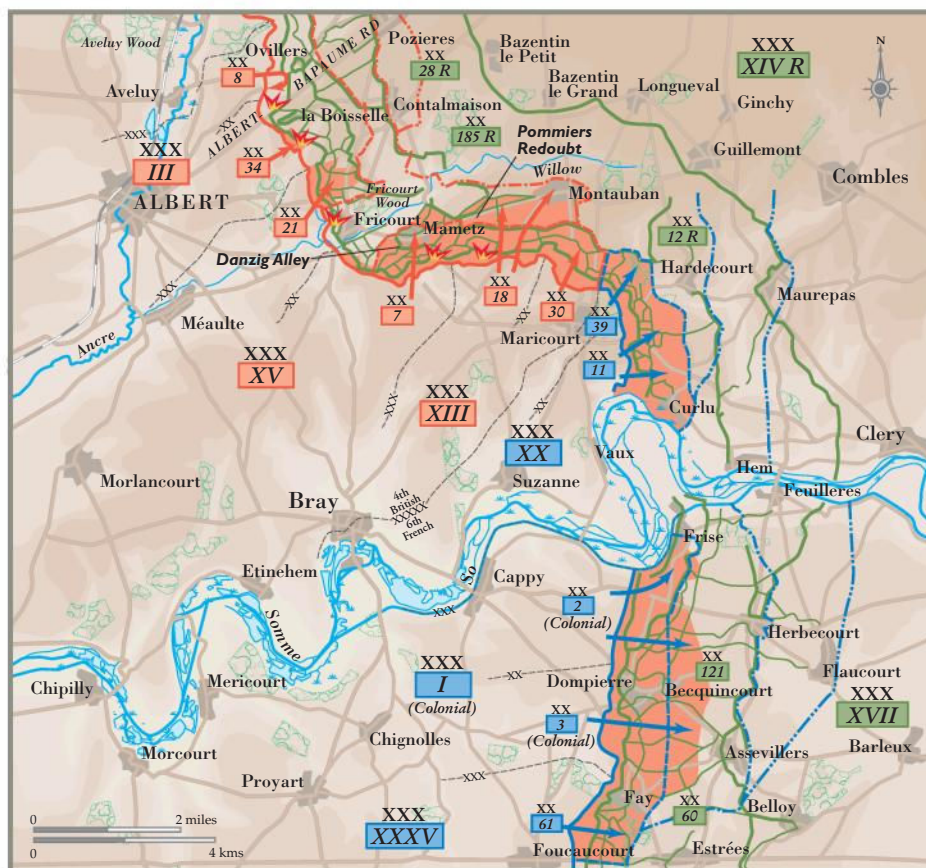
Lieutenant General Horne, GOC XV Corps, was a gunner who began the war as Haig's Brigadier General Royal Artillery (BGRA) in I Corps. He took command of 2nd Division in 1915 and XV Corps soon after Haig became Commander in Chief. With an enigmatic and ascetic personality, he was a professional and dedicated soldier rather than a great commander, but with a good staff to whom he gave full rein. Promoted to command First Army in September 1916, he alone of the Army Commanders has no published biography.

SAT 01 JUL



LEFT: A Flare pistol belonging to Sgt E. Gray (Yorkshire Rgt 7th Battalion) who died from wounds during the attack on Fricourt

"The 'Big Push', both north of and including the Albert-Bapaume Road, had failed to materialise"



THE SOMME - THE SOUTH: 1 July 1916

 Allied first objective
  Allied second objective
  Allied third objective
 Territory held by evening
  Mine



In spite of a heavy barrage, enough German machine guns survived so as to cause carnage among the left flank attack. The 10th Battalion, the West Yorkshires, lost 710 men of all ranks, the highest battalion casualties that day. Troops to their left also suffered heavily, including a company of 7th Green Howards, which was wiped out within a few yards of its start line. The 50th Brigade, ordered to attack Fricourt frontally, was cut to pieces – the Germans standing on the parapets to mow down the attackers.

Horne's third division, the 7th, was given the task of taking Mametz, another fortified village. Despite taking heavy casualties, especially in the 8th and 9th Devons, the outskirts of Mametz were reached in good time. A major defensive system, Danzig Alley, and German counter-attacks held up the advance for a while, but by mid-afternoon almost the entire village was in British hands. The Germans abandoned Fricourt, which had been outflanked, during the night.

Even better were the gains made by Lieutenant General Walter Congreve's XIII Corps on the extreme right of the British line. One of his

Troops of the French 11th Division dash through the wire of the German first line on their way to seize their objective in the vicinity of Curlu, part of the successful French attack on 1 July 1916



divisions, the 18th, was fortunate in being commanded by Major General Ivor Maxse, one of the best trainers in the British Army. By 3pm, the 18th Division had taken all its objectives, including Pommiers Redoubt, in hand-to-hand fighting in which quarter was neither asked nor given. To their right, the 30th Division, well supported by a creeping barrage provided by French artillery, were even quicker, and by 1pm had secured all their objectives, including the village of Montauban. The CO of the right-hand battalion of this division, Lieutenant Colonel B. C. Fairfax went over the top arm-in-arm with the CO of the French left flank battalion, Major Petit of the 3rd Battalion, 153rd Regiment.

Because of their commitment to Verdun, the French contribution to the Somme was much smaller than the 40 divisions originally envisaged by Joffre, but it was still significant and its level astonished Falkenhayn. It is a tribute to the fortitude of the French soldiers that on the 132nd day of the Battle of Verdun, they could still attack with such verve on the Somme. The veteran French XX Corps (the "Iron Corps") overwhelmed the German first position, having advanced under the cover of a thick mist. The *bonhommes* put to good use the fluid tactics learned at Verdun, advancing by short rushes. South of the River Somme, the I Colonial and XXXV Corps, attacking two hours later, took the enemy by surprise, seizing all their objectives (Dompierre, Becquincourt and Fay).

It is possible that had Rawlinson kept a really strong reserve ready to exploit success, much more could have been made of the progress in the south – perhaps leading to a breakthrough. As late as 3 July, a patrol from Maxse's 18th Division penetrated two miles behind German lines and encountered little opposition. The wisdom of hindsight must be treated with caution. Gough's cavalry force (part of General Sir Hubert Gough's Reserve Army, held ready to exploit success) would not have been strong enough on its own. For lack of reliable communications, the problem of deploying reserves in strength and at speed from a standing start to exploit an opportunity had not been resolved, and never really would be in this war. Furthermore, the Fourth Army's logistic system was not geared to support a rapid advance, in which the "customers", the fighting formations, are moving away from the "shops", the dumps, with damaged road and rail systems in between.

1 July, with 15,470 casualties, including 19,240 dead, was the bloodiest day in British army history. Why was the BEF's attack so disastrous? Insufficient artillery was one reason; poor shells, or too much reliance on shrapnel, was another. But overriding all this was lack of practice and training. This would come in time.



ABOVE: The Tyneside Irish Brigade (103rd Brigade of the 34th Division) advancing just south of the Albert-Bapaume Road on 1 July 1916

BELOW: A Vickers machine gun elevated to fire at long range, possibly overhead of its own troops. This is a film still from *The Battle of the Somme*



ABOVE: Formation sign of 30th Division

BELOW: Cap Badge of the Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment).

French infantry in a captured German trench south of the Somme, realigning the defences to face possible counter-attacks



ITEM 20

A hand-drawn map of the East Surrey
Regiment's 1 July objectives near Montauban.





ITEM 21

Lieutenant General Sir
Walter Congreve's 1 July
letter to his son Billy
about his XIII Corps'
attack on the Somme.

July 1.

My dear Billy,

2. day at last. a perfect morning. attack began at 7.30 preceded by 1 hour bombardment. Daylight hours were very anxious as I had the Infantry of 2 Divs packed into Carnoy Valley where every shell must have told on it & but the Boche did nothing. Reports kept coming in of satisfactory progress all along & we were in full possession of our objective before the time laid down i.e. 2 hours 50 mins after the zero hour.

The Boche still held out in pockets of trenches & did us a good deal of damage therefrom by rifle & machine gun fire. The way these pockets held out was very fine one in the trenches in the front line tho' surrounded from the 1st held out for several hours. Our casualties for the day came to close on 4000 of which 50th B^{de} of 18th Div. had most we took prisoners were 1000 Boches 6 mgs & a battery of field guns. Attacks on our left did not get on so well but they had a much harder job. My wire was splendidly cut everywhere. It amounted to 13000 yards much of it 15 to 20 yards thick. I believe we dumped 8.000 tons of amm^o before

the battle began on very front alone. Our captures included a Regt + a Batt Comd. The 3rd Div did particularly well & took Montauban at 1st msk. 40th Bde. I went round my dressing stations at 10 p.m. & found a huge quantity of walking wounded - too many I attribute it to the dark class of my troops who think & scratch a serious wound. really think it so hardy never before met a more lethal weapon than a table knife! I am so proud of my splendid fighting troops.
A perfect day.

Yours o/pet

Long

Report on the recent operation
of the
2^d The GORDON HIGHLANDERS.

At 9.25 p.m. on 30th June 1916 the battalion marched from the Bois des TAILLES to take up their positions in the trenches prior to the assault.

The strength of the battalion was:

Off.	Other ranks.
24	783

The battalion was in position by 1 a.m. on 1st July. Ladders and bridges were placed in position and the men received a sandwich and a lot of rum.

The assault was timed to take place at 7.30 a.m. 1st July.

At 6.25 a.m. a bombardment of the enemy's trenches commenced which was kept up till two hours (7.30 a.m.).

The battalion assaulted in 4 lines - 100 yards between lines.

The frontage for the battalion was about 400 yards.

The objective of the battalion was the village of HAMETZ.

Three distinct lines of trenches had to be crossed before the assault on the village was possible.

The 1st S. STAFFORD REGT. was on our right, whose objective was the E. side of HAMETZ VILLAGE, and the 9th DEVON REGT. on our LEFT, who were to push the line to the WEST of HAMETZ.

At 7.30 a.m. the assault was launched. The lines advanced steadily under a v. heavy machine gun fire and rifle fire and high explosive shrapnel. The casualties were heavy but the lines pushed on.

The left company (D) was held up by wire and suffered very considerably.

The road immediately in front of HAMETZ was occupied at 7.55 a.m.

The 1st message received - Timed 7.55 a.m. from O.C. 'A' Coy.

"Am rallying in sunken road N. of CEMETRY TRENCH preparatory to rushing HAMETZ"

ITEM 22

A Handwritten report on the successful 1 July attack on Mametz by 2nd Battalion, the Gordon Highlanders. The casualty rate for the battalion from 1 to 4 July was 56.9 per cent.

2nd message received - Timed 9 a.m. from O.C. 'A' Coy.

"Am in touch with party of 50 1st S. STAFFORD on right. They are in SHRINE ALLEY - cannot get any touch on my left which is at present in the air - HAMETZ being heavily shelled. Reinforcements badly needed."

3rd message received. Timed 9.30 a.m. from O.C. 'A' Coy.

"Situation more normal - HAMETZ still being heavily shelled - LEFT FLANK still in the air and valley WEST of SHRINE held by enemy machine guns. No officer or N.C.O. with party of 3 S. Staffords on my right."

4th message received. Timed 11.5 a.m. from O.C. 'A' Coy.

My left flank of SHRINE still in the air. Artillery cannot gain touch with D or C Coys (these two companies advanced in the sunken ground were held up by the wire) and have met with serious opposition from enemy's machine guns in valley W. of SHRINE. Am occupying road - propose to advance to objective when Devons and Borderers on LEFT get in line.

A reply to the 4th message was sent from R.H.Q. at 11.30 a.m. saying that "reinforcements were coming up but to hold on at all costs in your present position until you are re-inforced" (This message was never delivered, both runners being wounded). O.C. 2nd Gordons

5th message received - Timed 1.45 p.m. from O.C. 'A' Coy.

"Situation grave - being bombed by large parties at SHRINE - Reinforcements absolutely necessary."

A reply to 5th message was sent as follows at 2.40 p.m.

"Two companies 2nd Warricks are coming up to in support of you at once" O.C. 2nd Gordons.

The two companies of 2nd Warricks advanced in 4 lines at 4 p.m. and met with little opposition the enemy having surrendered (about 600) prior to the



3

2nd Div

3rd line of 2nd Warricks reaching the SUNKEN ROAD.

At 4.5 p.m. MATETZ VILLAGE was captured. A force consisting of 2nd Warricks, 2nd Gordons 6th Divisions and 3 machine gun sections went forward to the N. side of MATETZ VILLAGE to consolidate the position.

The distribution was as follows.

2 Coy 2nd Warricks held the line from the LEFT of the 1st Staffords linking up with the 2nd Gordons Highlanders who linked up with the 6th Divisions on the left.

The position was consolidated. 3 strong points made and 2 machine gun sections placed in each strong point.

At 10 p.m. 2 Coy 2nd Warricks came up and were formed a close support - R.H.Q. being in SHAME ALLEY.

The 9th Coy R.E. worked throughout the night in assisting in consolidating the position.

During the night a good deal many high explosive shells burst over MATETZ VILLAGE but little damage was done.

The whole of July 2nd the position remained unaltered and on July 3rd about 11 p.m. orders were received for the 8th Divisions to take over the line occupied by the troops (distribution above) & the 2nd Warricks and ourselves withdrew. We marched back to the CITADEL about 3 miles arriving at 3 a.m. on 4th July.

The casualties amounted to -

	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Returned
Officers	7	9		
Other ranks	119	285	39	Total
			off - 16	
			Other ranks 445.	

4

The battalion captured 600 prisoners, one machine gun one trench mortar, one anti-aircraft machine gun. The prisoners captured comprised the 110th & 109th P.R. also 23rd P.R. & 18th M. Gun Corps.

A signal station was established at S.W. corner of MATETZ VILLAGE at 10 a.m. and communication was established with 91st Brigade.

6-7-16.

By R. Gordon Lt Colonel commanding 2nd The Gordon Highlanders.

At 4.0 p.m.

P.S. A party under 1st Lieut. Lawrence found all the day out of the H.A.T. accounting for many casualties and prisoners.

TUNNELLING

Deadly Moles Under No Man's Land

Tunnelling or mining on the Western Front fulfilled the same function as it had done in siege warfare throughout the ages.

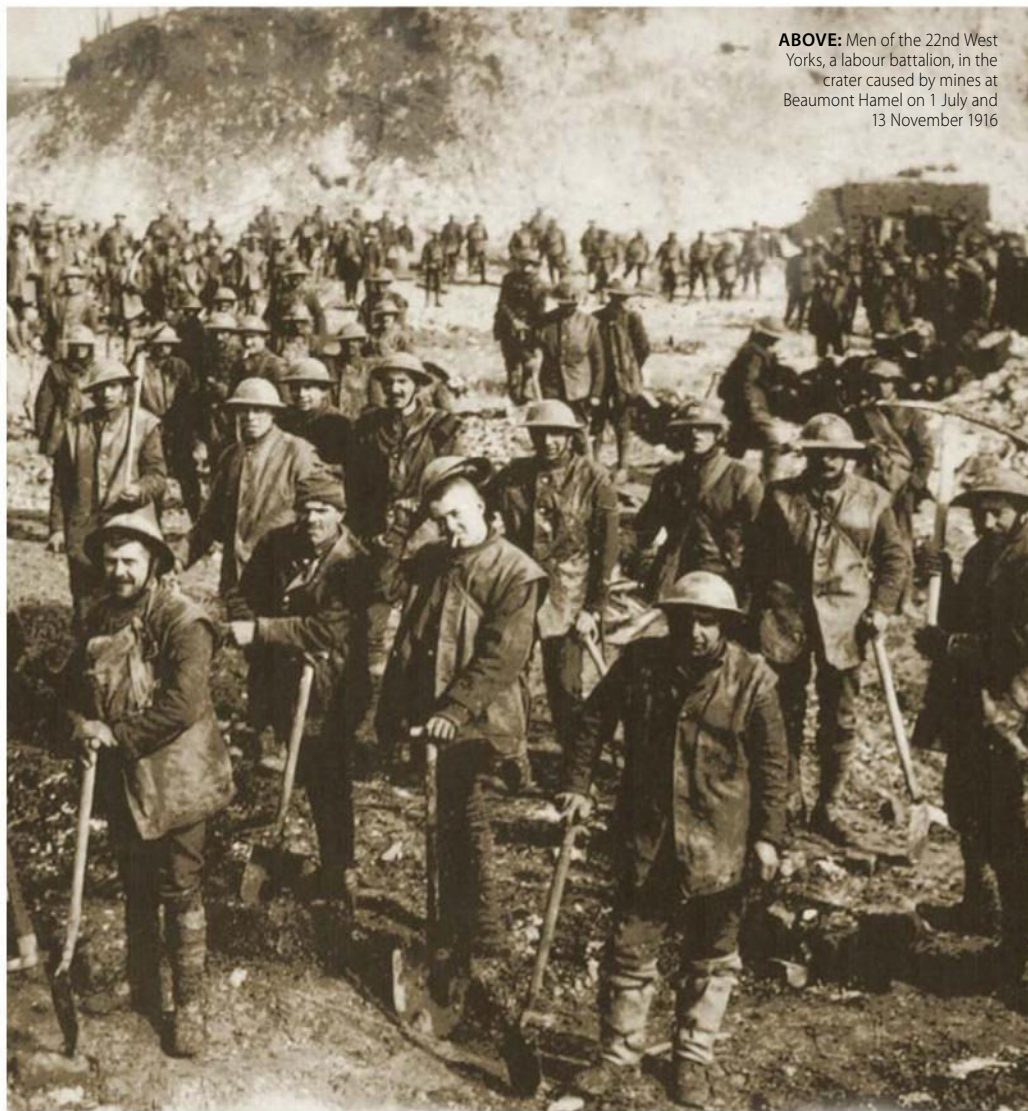
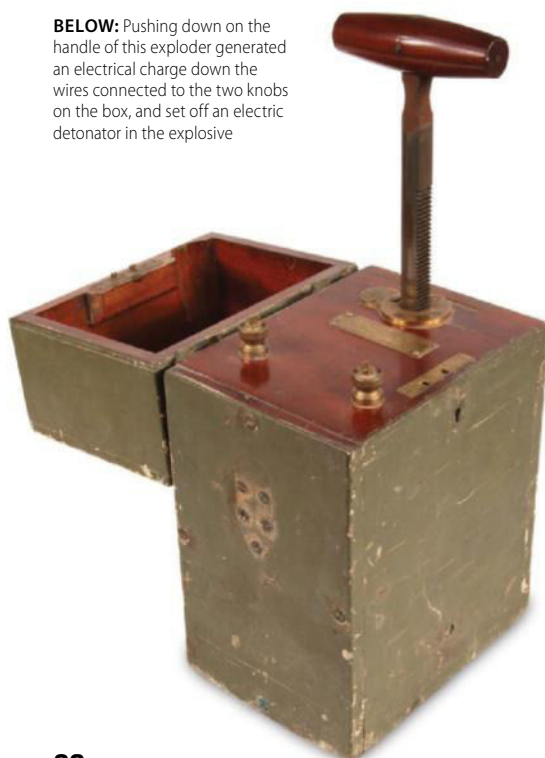
Driving galleries forward under no man's land, beginning from shafts sunk well in the rear, tunnellers built enlarged chambers under enemy trenches, which they filled with explosives to convert the tunnel into a mine to be detonated under the enemy defences.

Tunnels were also dug to provide listening posts for detecting enemy activity and to prevent one's own trenches from being blown up by enemy mines. Sometimes "Russian Saps" would be dug, which involved driving a tunnel towards the enemy, followed by digging upwards to allow a storming party to burst out of the ground close to, or even among, the enemy trenches.

On the Somme, these included the "Cat" and the "Rat" in the 4th Division's sector and three more in the 29th Division's area, two of which were taken to within 30 yards of the German front trench. There were many other "Russian Saps"; six for XIII Corps alone, for example, dug right across no man's land and were ready to be connected to the German front line by blowing small charges.

When enemy tunnelling activity was detected, usually by listening devices, a counter-sap could be dug, filled with explosives and then detonated to blow in the walls and roof of the enemy mine. Sometimes the tunnellers on each side would be

BELOW: Pushing down on the handle of this exploder generated an electrical charge down the wires connected to the two knobs on the box, and set off an electric detonator in the explosive



ABOVE: Men of the 22nd West Yorks, a labour battalion, in the crater caused by mines at Beaumont Hamel on 1 July and 13 November 1916

involved in a deadly race to detonate their charge first. The key to this form of warfare was silence. Men occasionally worked barefoot, and the floor would be carpeted with sandbags. Talking was forbidden. In the chalky soil on the Somme, carpenter's augers bored holes into which vinegar was poured, and the chalk, thus softened, was quietly scraped out. From time to time tunnellers dug with bayonets, prising out small chunks of chalk to be caught by another man as they fell. An advance of 18 inches in 24 hours was regarded as satisfactory.

Lack of activity in a known enemy tunnel could mean one of two things: the enemy was about to blow the charge; or they had temporarily abandoned the work. Divining correctly what the opposition intended could be a matter of life or death for one's own tunnellers and the occupants

of trenches in the vicinity. This underground war of "moles" absorbed an increasing number of men, and tunnelling companies were formed from experienced miners.

By June 1916, there were 32 tunnelling companies in the BEF, comprising a total of 25,000 men. Mining schools were formed to give special instruction in mining tactics, listening and mine rescue so that men would benefit from others' experience and not have to buy it dearly beneath the trenches.

By the first day of the Somme, there was still much to learn. As well as big mines, many minor ones were detonated. On the whole, most of these were too scattered up and down the Front to have a noticeable effect on the Germans. But Lochnagar mine (60,000lb of ammonal) and Y Sap (40,600lb of ammonal and the longest ever tunnel



ABOVE: A German officer about to detonate a mine under Allied trenches

driven in chalk in the war), both near La Boisselle; three mines opposite the Tambour salient facing Fricourt; and one at Casino Point in the 18th Division's sector, were all blown at 7.28am, two minutes before Zero Hour. The aim was to give the attacker the opportunity to exploit the surprise caused by the explosion, while not giving the defenders time to react.

The 1,000 foot-long Hawthorn Redoubt mine in the 29th and 4th Divisions' sector of attack was blown at 7.20am. This gave the Germans just enough warning to react. But worse, in order to allow troops to get forward to occupy the crater, the howitzers firing HE on forward enemy machine gun positions were to lift at the time of the blowing of the mine, and, for a reason that remains a mystery, this procedure was adopted

for the whole of VIII Corps' attack. This left just 18-pounders firing shrapnel for the last ten minutes before Zero Hour, and, even more astounding, in 29th Division's sector half the 18-pounders themselves lifted to fire onto the German support line. As a result of the barrage lifting early, the Germans were able to man trenches and dominate the crater with fire.

As in so many other areas, the orchestration of the many "players" involved in a battle of this magnitude left a great deal to be desired.

"The ground all round was white with debris of chalk as if it had been snowing, and a gigantic crater gaped like an open wound in the side of the hill"

A German reaction to the Hawthorn Redoubt crater, from a German regimental account (German Reserve Regiment Number 119):

"There was a terrific explosion, which for a moment completely drowned out the thunder of the artillery"

"A great cloud of smoke rose up from the trenches of No 9 Company, followed by a tremendous shower of stones. More than three sections of No 9 Company were blown into the air, and the neighbouring dugouts were broken in and blocked. The ground all round was white with debris of chalk as if it had been snowing, and a gigantic crater gaped like an open wound in the side of the hill.

This explosion was the signal for the infantry attack, and everyone got ready and stood on the lower steps of the dugouts, rifles in hand, waiting for the bombardment to lift.

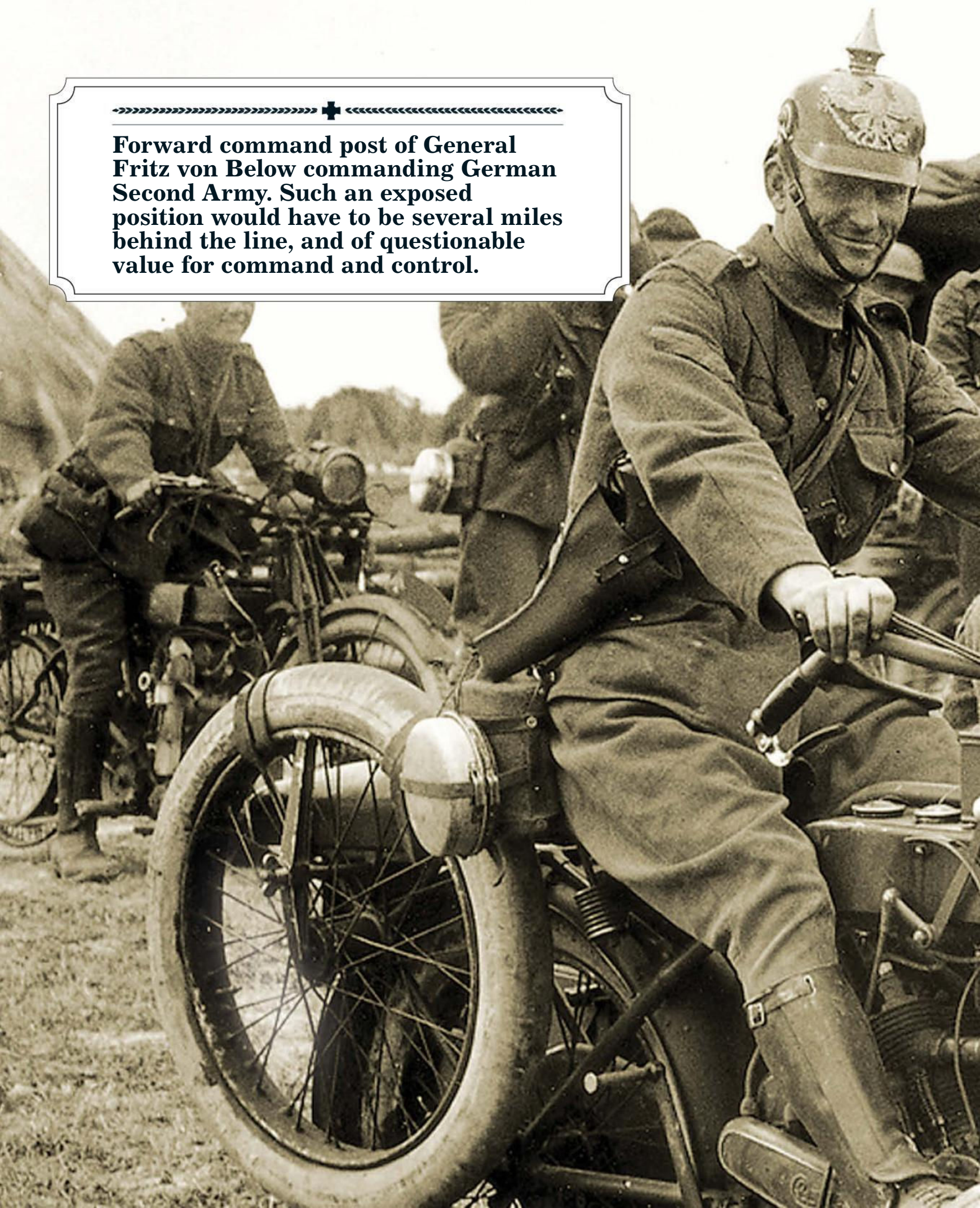
In a few minutes the shelling ceased, and we rushed up the steps and out into the crater positions. Ahead of us wave after wave of British troops were crawling out of their trenches, and coming forward towards us at a walk, their bayonets glistening in the sun."

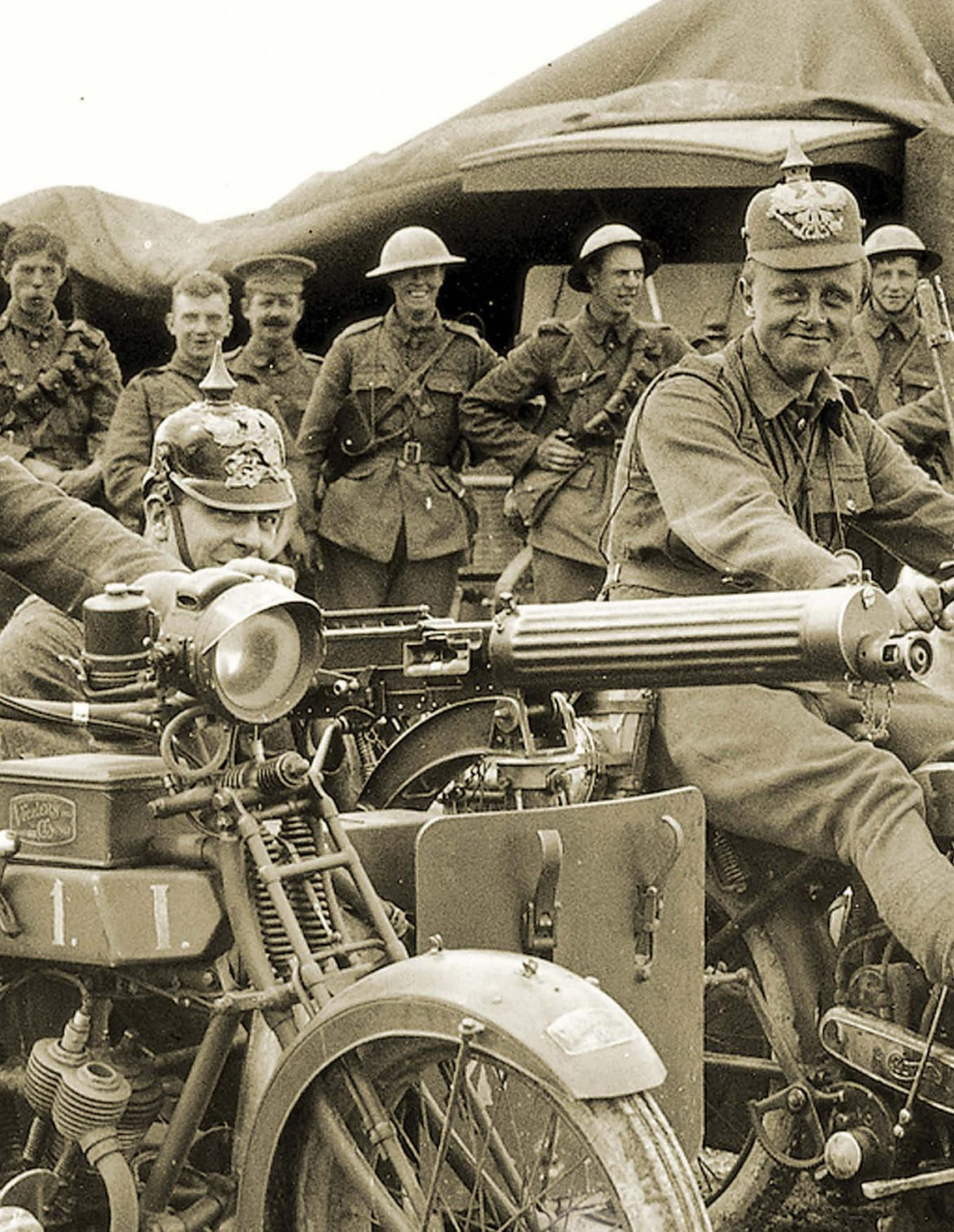


ABOVE: Frames from the film *The Battle of the Somme* showing a 40,000lb mine below the Hawthorn Redoubt at 7.20am on 1 July 1916



Forward command post of General Fritz von Below commanding German Second Army. Such an exposed position would have to be several miles behind the line, and of questionable value for command and control.





THE BATTLE OF ALBERT

Keeping up the Pressure

Some of Haig's critics have argued that he should have closed down the battle after the disastrous first day. Even if he had wanted to, he could not do so. The French, now into the fifth month of fighting at Verdun, would have protested passionately, and rightly so, at the British abandoning the fight after only one day of battle. The Germans, occupying most of Belgium and a substantial part of France, could only be removed by victory on the Western Front. Haig had no intention of giving up and was determined to continue, but by his own design. Joffre wanted the next push to come north of the Albert-Bapaume Road, whereas Haig – reasonably enough – insisted on attempting to exploit the

gains on the southern end of his line. Haig is, however, open to criticism for the manner in which the offensive was conducted between 3 and 13 July, with a series of “penny-packet” attacks, often with insufficient artillery support and at the expense of around 25,000 British casualties.

On 2 July, Gough's Reserve Army (later redesignated Fifth Army) took command of X and VIII Corps, north and inclusive of the Bapaume Road, leaving Rawlinson with III, XV, and XIII Corps to capitalise on the 1 July successes. On 2 July, a German counter-attack at Montauban was thrown back by artillery fire, while the abandoned Fricourt was taken unopposed by the British 17th Division.

The next main attack was planned for 14 July against the German second line between Bazentin-le-Grand and Longueval. Before this could take place, it was necessary to secure Mametz Wood, Contalmaison and Trônes Wood. To the west of Contalmaison, La Boisselle was secured on 3 July, but attacks by Gough at Ovillers and the Leipzig Salient at Thiepval failed. XV Corps was slow to follow up its success and, although patrols found Mametz Wood unoccupied on 3 July, by the next day it was strongly held.

Mametz Wood was a tangled mass of nearly impenetrable undergrowth and fallen trees, interlaced with barbed wire. Numerous machine guns were sited along its southern face, covering

SUN 02 JUL – THU 13 JUL



ABOVE: The “Leaning Virgin” on Notre Dame de Brebières at Albert. According to legend when the virgin fell, the war would end. She was brought down by British artillery on 16 April 1918 during the Second Battle of the Somme when the Germans occupied Albert. The war ended seven months later



ABOVE: Cap badge of the 1st Worcestershires

German prisoners under escort carry a wounded British soldier on a stretcher back from La Boisselle, 3 July 1916





Men of the 10th Notts & Derby (Sherwood Foresters) 17th Division, with souvenirs after the attack on Fricourt. The dog had been found in a dugout

the sloping ground over which the British would have to attack. Between 8 and 12 July, the 38th (Welsh) Division made a series of attacks on the wood. The Welshmen eventually got within 50 yards of the northern edge before being pulled out. They had taken 4,000 casualties, including seven battalion commanders. The remainder of the wood was cleared and then held by the 62nd Brigade of the 21st Division at a cost of nearly 1,000 casualties until they were relieved on the night of 15/16 July.

Contalmaison, a 1 July objective, commanded the rising ground west of Mametz Wood. On 8 July, the 1st Worcesters of 24th Brigade, 23rd Division forced their way into Contalmaison as far as the church, but out of ammunition and grenades they had to fall back. Further attempts by the 17th Division made some gains, at a cost of nearly 4,800 casualties. The 23rd Division then renewed the attack, finally taking the village on 10 July, when the 8th Green Howards and 11th West Yorkshires met at its northern end. The Green Howards had been reduced to eight officers and 150 soldiers. The Germans counter-attacked, but were driven off.

Between 8 and 13 July, a series of attacks were mounted on Trônes Wood, which changed hands several times in six days of bloody fighting. By 12 July, the 30th Division had lost 90 officers and 1,800 soldiers. Maxse's 18th Division now took over, but made little progress. Five major attacks and four German counter-attacks had reduced the wood to a few bloodstained shell-shattered

A Lewis gunner of the 1/6th Glosters in a trench at Ovillers

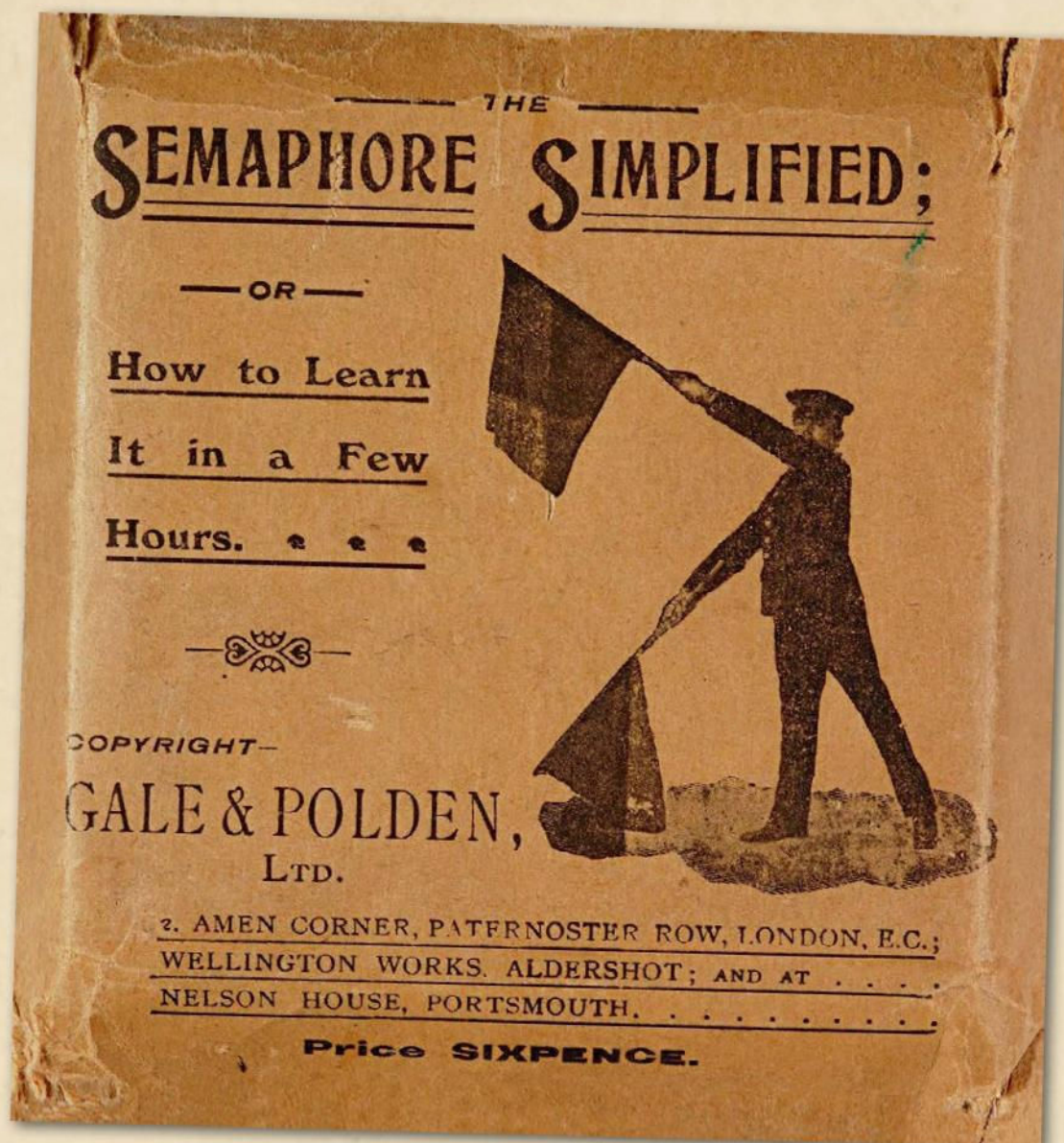


stumps. There was now grave concern at XIII Corps headquarters that Trônes Wood would not be secure in time for the main assault, planned for dawn on 14 July.

Between 2 and 13 July, meanwhile, General Fayolle's French Sixth Army had captured Frise and Herbecourt south of the Somme, while Foch had ordered Fayolle to keep the left flank of his army on the defensive until Trônes and Mametz Woods and Contalmaison had been taken by the British. As Foch's order put it: "*pour le moment tout l'effort français va se concentrer au sud de la rivière*" ("for the moment the entire French effort will be concentrated to the south of the river").

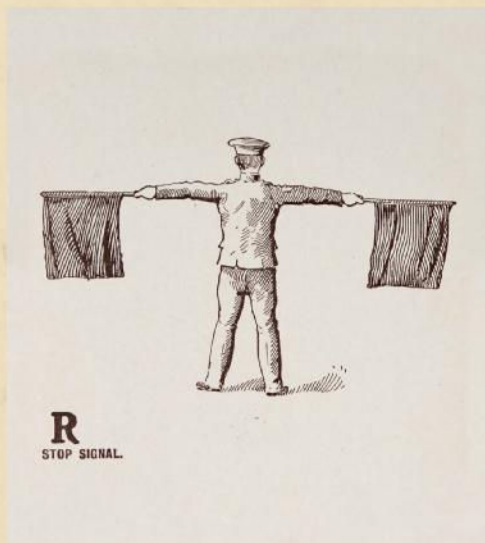


ABOVE: Formation sign of 38th (Welsh) division



ITEM 23

A pack of semaphore learning cards. Optical signalling methods were needed when telephone lines were cut by artillery fire or when infantry were advancing.



SIXTH CIRCLE.

This circle consists of two letters only, the stationary arm is in the position of the letter E, and the other is placed in the position of the letters F and G, thus forming the letters VV and X.

The last and one remaining letter of the alphabet is the letter Z, and it is formed by placing the right arm at the position of F and the left in the position of G.

NOTE.—When single letters are being made they should always be made with the arm which is on that side of the body on which the letter is made, and the arm on the opposite side of the body should never be brought across for the purpose of making these letters.

Great care must be taken to avoid all bending of the wrists, and the flag **MUST** always be kept perfectly in prolongation of the arm to avoid the making of bad letters, which will otherwise most undoubtedly be read for others than those for which they are intended. Moreover, there is a tendency to let the arms swing to the rear; this is an odious habit and practically renders the sender unreadable.

There are a few further points which it is essential to observe, and they are the following:—

- (i) Always be most careful to keep the arms at the correct angles.
- (ii) Use two flags of the same colour.
- (iii) Turn on the hips a little when making the letters H, I, X, Z, W and O.
- (iv) Keep the flags unfurled, otherwise they are practically useless.

5

BOOKS, ETC., RECOMMENDED FOR SIGNALLING.

Signaller's Pocket Book of Hints & Notes on Army Signalling: s. d.	
By Capt. G. W. BROWN, 20th Hussars	0 6
Guide to Army Signalling: with Quos. and Ans. By R. L. G. HENRIQUES, The Queen's	1 0
Notes on Army Signalling: A Handbook of Reference for Signallers.	0 3
Messages for Classification Tests in Army Signalling: 40 Morse Whole Messages, 40 Morse Half Messages, 20 Semaphore Messages, Bound in One Block	2 0
Semaphore Messages for Classification Tests (Moving Station) in Army Signalling for Territorial Forces. Bound in Blocks of 50 Messages (all different). Perforated to tear out.	1 6
The Handy Refill Case: To hold message Forms, etc., Made in Waterproof Canvas, with pockets, pencil, and eraser	1 6
Army Telegraphs & Signals Message Books: C. 2121	0 9
Signalling Scribbling Book: Army Book 119c	1 6
Semaphore Alphabet and Numeral Signs: In Large Sheet Form Size 20ins. by 30 ins., showing sender's Positions "Front" View	0 3
On Linen, in Case for Pocket	0 3
On Board and Variorol.	2 0
Semaphore Alphabet and Numeral Signs in "Miniature": On untearable linen to fold for pocket, showing sender's Positions "Front" and "Rear" Views	0 0
Morse A, B, C: Learnt in half-an-hour, and abbreviated instructions for Flag Signallers. By Major A. R. WILLIS	1 0
Signalling Test Groups: On Card with 12 groups	1 0
Morse Alphabet: An easy method of learning. This method is the simplest and best way of mastering signalling. Printed on untearable linen for pocket, with diagram and full instructions	0 3
Obtainable upon receipt of remittance, from the Printers and Publishers—	
Gale & Polden, Ltd., Wellington Works, Aldershot,	
and at London and Portsmouth,	
P 2 222	
or of all Booksellers.	

SEMAPHORE SIMPLIFIED

Or How to Learn it in a Few Hours.

Price 6d. (complete with cards).

Gale & Polden, Ltd., Aldershot.

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INSTRUCTIONS.

THE various letters of the alphabet are formed by placing one or both arms in certain positions. These positions are governed by certain conditions, which are as follows: The circle, of which one's chest may be taken as the centre, consists of four right angles, each of these right angles is divided into two angles of 45 degrees. Therefore, there are eight positions in which an arm can be placed. An arm is never in any position other than one of these. To enable the letters to be more easily read than they would be when formed with the arms only, flags are usually employed, the poles of which are held in the hands (one in each), care being taken that they are kept in the exact prolongation of the arms.

Before describing the way the various letters are formed it must be borne in mind by the reader of this that: a signaller who is sending on Semaphore *always* faces the individual to whom he is sending.

The first circle of the alphabet is composed of the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, which are formed as follows: To form the letter A the right arm is placed at the first angle of 45 degrees on the right hand side of the body, the angle being that

formed between an imaginary line drawn perpendicularly through the centre of the body and a straight line down the arm. This is the first part of the four right angles used, and is commenced at the bottom, on the right side of the body.

To form the letter B a further angle, 45 degrees, is added to this first one, thus making a right angle with the vertical line down the centre of the body, on the right-hand side.

The letter C is made in accordance with the above, that is to say, by adding 45 degrees on to the amount of the circle already used, this will bring the arm to a position midway between that at right angles to the body as in letter B and the continuation of the vertical line prolonged upwards through the centre of the body.

The letter D is made by placing the arm in continuation of the vertical line through the body, in other words, straight above the head.

Up to this all the letters have been made with the right arm alone, and half of the four right angles have been expended.

The remaining letters of the first circle are made with the left arm only and on the left hand side of the body. The first of these is E, and it is formed by placing the arm 45 degrees to the left of the vertical line drawn through the centre of the body.

The letter F is made by adding 45 more degrees on to this angle, so bringing the arm at right angles to the body, as in the letter B, except that it is on the opposite side of the body. Similarly the letter G is made by adding another angle of 45 degrees on to this, and so we arrive at the last letter of the first circle.

2

SECOND CIRCLE.

Up to now only one arm has been employed in the formation of the letters, but as all the positions which are employed have been used it is necessary to bring two arms into play. Therefore the letters of the remaining circles are formed by a combination of the two arms in the various positions above described.

The letter H, being the first letter of the second circle, is made as follows: The right arm is placed at the position described for the formation of the letter A, and the left arm in that of letter B; the result is the letter H. It is apparent that to form a combination with the arms until the left arrives at the position prescribed for the letter G it is unnecessary to move the right arm from the position of the letter A, therefore that arm is kept there and the only arm that is moved is the left, which is moved through successive angles of 45 degrees (the letter J is omitted in this circle). Thus, when the right arm is at the position of A and the left at the position of C the letter I is formed, and when the left arm is in the position of D and the right still at A the letter K is formed.

In reality what is done is, the right arm is kept in the position of the letter A, and the left is moved into the positions of B, C, D, E, F, G successively, thus forming the letters H, I, K, L, M, N.

THIRD CIRCLE.

The letters composing this circle are O, P, Q, R, S, and are formed on the same principle as those in the other circles. It

3

will be noted that the combinations of A and each of the other positions which represent a letter have been used, and this time the combination of B and each of the other positions are employed, therefore the non-moving arm this time must be that in the position of the letter B, while the left arm is moved into the positions of C, D, E, F, G, these being the only five left, and as the arm is so moved successively into these positions the letters O, P, Q, R, S are formed.

FOURTH CIRCLE.

The letters forming this circle are only four in number, as the non-moving arm is at the position of the letter C, and there are only four more positions left for the left arm to be placed in, viz., those of D, E, F, G. The letters thus formed are not those which follow in the ordinary sequence in the alphabet, but are the letters T, U, V, and the "erase" sign.

N.B.—The "erase" is equivalent to the Morse system and is used in exactly the same manner.

FIFTH CIRCLE.

In this circle there are only three letters, the stationary arm being at the position of the letter D, and the other moved into the positions of E, F, G, and the letters which these combinations represent are the letters "numeral sign," J and V.

N.B.—The "numeral sign" is equivalent to FI in the Morse system, and means that figures are about to be sent. The letter J is used in the place of FF in the Morse system, and means that the figures are over, it is used for this purpose in addition to its ordinary use.

4



B
2



READY.

DAWN ATTACK

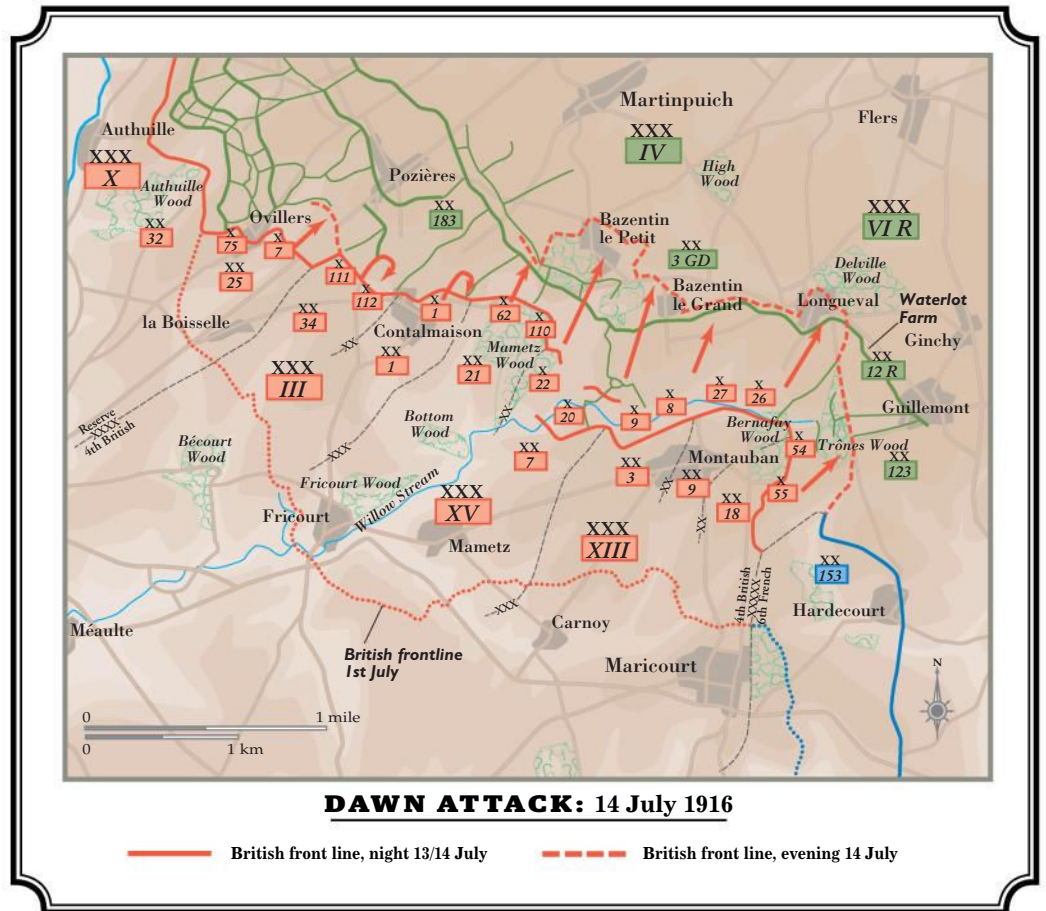
Incomplete Victory

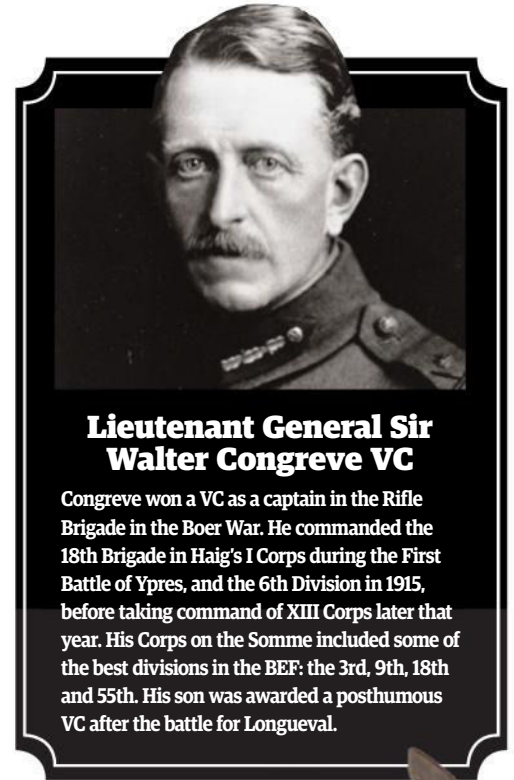
FRI 14 JUL

At midnight on 13/14 July, the 12th Middlesex and 6th Northamptonshires of the 54th Brigade of 18th Division were ordered up to make a desperate attempt to secure Trônes Wood, while four other divisions lay out in the misty night ready to storm the German second positions. Lieutenant Colonel F. A. Maxwell VC, commanding the Middlesex, led the attack. After six hours of desperate fighting costing 450 casualties, the wood was secured and its defenders were so distracted during that time they had been unable to fire on the flanks of Fourth Army's main attack.

This was to be carried out by the 9th and 3rd Divisions of XIII Corps, who were to secure the German positions between Delville Wood and Bazentin-le-Grand village, while the 7th and 21st Divisions of XV Corps masked Bazentin-le-Grand and Bazentin-le-Petit Woods. On the left, troops of III Corps would mount an auxiliary attack. All attacks were synchronised to be at 3.25am – dawn – and preceded by a five-minute “hurricane” bombardment instead of the usual 30 minutes the Germans would expect.

Over the previous three days, wire-cutting bombardments had been steadily progressing. Three cavalry divisions were to exploit to High Wood and Martinpuich. At first Haig forbade an attack at dawn, judging that the troops lacked the experience to make a night approach, but





Lieutenant General Sir Walter Congreve VC

Congreve won a VC as a captain in the Rifle Brigade in the Boer War. He commanded the 18th Brigade in Haig's I Corps during the First Battle of Ypres, and the 6th Division in 1915, before taking command of XIII Corps later that year. His Corps on the Somme included some of the best divisions in the BEF: the 3rd, 9th, 18th and 55th. His son was awarded a posthumous VC after the battle for Longueval.

BELOW: The standard British service revolver, the .455 Webley MkVI



RIGHT: Cap badge of the Northamptonshire Regiment



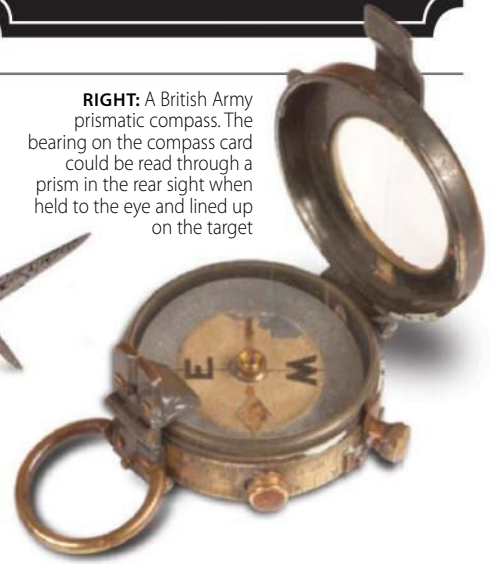
LEFT: The whistle carried by infantry officers with a leather thong to button it on to a tunic



RIGHT: A British Army prismatic compass. The bearing on the compass card could be read through a prism in the rear sight when held to the eye and lined up on the target



ABOVE: A metal spiked caltrop scattered on the ground for use against cavalry



Rawlinson got his way. At 3.20am, the whole sky behind the infantry of the four attacking divisions lit up with the roar of the barrage, for the first time fired exclusively with HE.

Despite Haig's doubts, 22,000 men had moved into position without the Germans realising it. Indeed, the assault brigades had crept across most of the 1,200 yards of no man's land and were within a few hundred yards of the German trenches. In fact, the closest, the 9th Brigade, was within 50 yards. At 3.25am, the infantry rose and hurled themselves into the German trenches, killing the defenders as they emerged one-by-one from their dugouts.

The 7th, 21st and 3rd Divisions took all their objectives. The 9th (Scottish) Division got into the fringe of Delville Wood, but was unable to take all of Longueval or capture Waterlot Farm (actually a sugar factory). Nevertheless, by mid-morning,

6,000 yards of the German second position was in British hands. If the Germans were surprised, so were the French.

When success was signalled to General Balfourier, the much-beloved commander of the French XX Corps on the British right, he said, "*Alors, le général Montgomery ne mange pas son chapeau.*" ("So, General Montgomery will not eat his hat."). Earlier, Balfourier had sent a message with Captain Spears, British liaison officer, that a dawn attack preceded by a night approach march was impossible for such inexperienced troops. Major General A. A. Montgomery, Rawlinson's Chief of Staff had replied, "Tell General Balfourier with my compliments that if we are not on Longueval Ridge at eight tomorrow morning I will eat my hat."

Unfortunately, this stunning success was not exploited. The cavalry was released too late and

was insufficient in strength. Instead of allowing divisional commanders to use their initiative, there was too much "back-seat driving" higher up. Infantry brigades held ready by divisions to exploit forward were instead held back on orders from Fourth Army in case of German counter-attacks taking place.

The result was that the brilliant capture of the Bazentin Ridge – albeit at a significant cost of over 9,000 British casualties – degenerated into the long grinding fight for High Wood and Delville Wood. The attack demonstrated that artillery, properly orchestrated in an all-arms battle, worked. Unfortunately, this lesson was not always applied in the weeks ahead.

Nevertheless the Somme battle was already beginning to bear fruit in another way: on 12 July, Falkenhayn suspended major offensive operations at Verdun.

ITEM 24

The official war diary of 20th Brigade, 7th Infantry Division, describing minute- by-minute the 14 July dawn attack and operations on the following day.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Erase heading not required.)

Army Form C. 2118

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	July 13th	12 noon.	Colonel Head, R.A. reported re wire cutting on right of the SHOUT. Brigadier General Steele, Lieut Col Bonham Carter and Captain Hoare leave.	
		P.M. 5'30	Conference of C.O's. O.O. 14th Brigade R.H.A. and 95th Field Company, R.E. attended. O.O. No 74 issued.	
		10.	Brigade Major visited H.Q. 9th Infantry Brigade at the LOOP and met 8th Devon Regt marching up. H.Q. 9th Devon Regt also visited.	
	14th	A.M. 5'20	Captain Compton Smith reports 2nd Border Regt in position in touch with 8th Devon Regt.	
		5'30	Captain Hoare reports 22nd Infantry Brigade in position without a casualty.	
		5'40	Lieut Ephraums reports 8th Devon Regt in position and were crawling forward 2'55 a.m.	
		5'55	Green flares seen just to right of BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD, as far as can be seen.	
		4'25	A green flare seen to the right of BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD.	
		4'37	Lieut Colonel THORPE, 2nd Border Regt reports Message received from Major Oswald, 12th West Yorks Regt "Am in Germans front line in all places and am suffering casualties, under attack "	
		4'42	A green flare seen burning in East edge of BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD. This information repeated to 7th Division, who report 1st Division have got CONTALMAISON VILLA and lower WOOD.	
		5'4	Some troops reported moving up from MANETZ WOOD.	
		5'9	F.O.O. reports seeing 8th Devon Regt going into BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD.	
		5'10	Lines of men advancing up slope to BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD.	

1875 Wt. W 593/826 1,000,000 4/15 J.B.C. & A. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118.

WAR DIARY
or
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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	July 14th	P.M. 7'30	20th T.M. Battery told to remain for the night at MARLBORO WOOD.	
		7'50	Visual touch established with 2nd Gordon Highlanders.	
		7'55	"T" Battery O.P. reports Infantry have reached S.P.A. and S.P.C. with little resistance.	
		7'45	2nd Border Regt send in captured documents and an automatic rifle.	
		8.	8th Devon Regt reports capture of 2 - 8" Howitzers.	
		8'15	Lieut Col Gordon, 2nd Gordon Highlanders reports his battalion holding LE PETIT WOOD and North edge of BAZENTIN LE PETIT VILLAGE. Casualties 2 officers wounded, 6 men killed and 20 men wounded.	
		9'55	Brigadier returns.	
	July 15.	A.M. 9'40	Captain Compton Smith reported seen wounded.	
		9'45	Major General Watts, 7th Division arrives.	
		P.M. 12'45	Orders issued to battalions (B.M.300) 11 a.m. 22nd Infantry Brigade rung up and arranged that they will again make certain of their touch on the left. Also that we let 22nd Infantry Brigade know when 8th Devon Regt move off as 22nd Infantry Brigade want to move up a battalion.	
		2'50	7th Division order 1 Battalion to BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD, one to CATERPILLAR WOOD and two about POMMIERS REDOUBT.	
		3.	7th Division order 22nd Infantry Brigade to send one battalion to BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD.	
		3 - 4.	Commanding Officers report at Brigade H.Q. for instructions.	
		6.	2nd Border Regt arriving in POMMIERS REDOUBT. 8th Devon Regt arriving in WHITE TRENCH	

1875 Wt. W 593/826 1,000,000 4/15 J.B.C. & A. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118.

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (Erase heading not required.)			Army Form C. 2118	
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs. Part II. and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.				
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	July 14th.	A.M. 7'37	Adjutant, 14th Brigade R.H.A. reports that guns have been ordered to barrage a line 300 yards North of a line running E and W through most Northern house in BAZENTIN LE PETIT.	
		7'55	O.P. D/14 reports Infantry massing behind HIGH WOOD.	
		11'45	Brigadier General Seely called at Brigade H.Q. states "Canadian Cavalry Brigade behind POMMIERS REDGUEZ and one troop South of MAMEZ WOOD. At 10'45 a.m. 1 Regiment (7th D.G.) Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade was seen by General Seely South of MAMEZ WOOD.	
		P.M. 12'5	22nd Infantry Brigade report a large number of enemy advancing from HIGH WOOD.	
		12'10	Enemy attacking CEMETERY and WINDMILL. Divisional Artillery shooting at them with observed fire	
		12'55	Lieut Morshead, Brigade Signal Officer, returns from BAZENTIN LE GRAND and brought back sketches from 8th Devon Regt and 2nd Border Regt.	
		5.	Our infantry seen on WINDMILL HILL Ridge. Situation appreciated that 2 battalions 22nd Infantry Brigade were carrying out an attack towards HIGH WOOD.	
		3'45	"T" Battery reports message intercepted "Enemy advancing from HIGH WOOD".	
		5.	Lieut LAWLEY, 20th M.G.Coy reports the situation.	
		6'20	Major DOBSON, 95th Field Coy, R.E. reports the xxx original Brigade objective strongly consolidated at the strong points detailed in orders.	
		6'25	Situation reported to 7th Division.	
		6'45	2nd Gordon Highlanders reported by 22nd Infantry Brigade to be holding 200 yards N. of BAZENTIN LE PETIT VILLAGE, and in BAZENTIN LE PETIT WOOD.	
			1875 Wt. W993/846 1,000,000 4/15 J.B.C. & A. A.D.S.S./Form C. 2118.	

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (Erase heading not required.)			Army Form C. 2118	
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs. Part II. and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.				
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	July 14th	A.M. 5'11	7th Division reports 21st Division position.	
		5'30	2 small batches of prisoners reported coming in from BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD.	
		5'38	9th Infantry Brigade report "Left and right battalions consolidating 2nd line, and right Brigade hung up by wire in front of 2nd line. Trenches reported obliterated"	
		5'45	3 lines going up on West edge of BAZENTIN LE GRAND WOOD and appeared to meet with no opposition. About 30 prisoners seen coming back from East edge of the WOOD.	
		5'55	Communication to 22nd Infantry Brigade and 2nd Gordon Highlanders broken.	
		5'59	Communication through to 2nd Border Regt.	
		6.	50 prisoners seen coming down.	
		6'7	Machine guns ordered forward.	
		6'20	Orders sent out to 2nd Border Regt (B.M.269)	
		6'45	Adjutant 8th Devon Regt reports situation (B.M.270)	
		7	2nd Border Regt received message (1) received.	
		7'15	Lieut LAWLEY, 20th M.G.Coy reports doing some execution to enemy bolting from BAZENTIN LE PETIT. Brigadier General STEELE, 22nd Infantry Brigade reports that he has captured BAZENTIN LE PETIT. He is uncertain about the CEMETERY. 9th Infantry Brigade report they have gained BAZENTIN LE GRAND. 9th Division reported by 7th Division to have captured LONGUEVAL.	
		7'25	7th Division report 150 Regiment supposed to be in Reserve.	
			1875 Wt. W993/846 1,000,000 4/15 J.B.C. & A. A.D.S.S./Form C. 2118.	

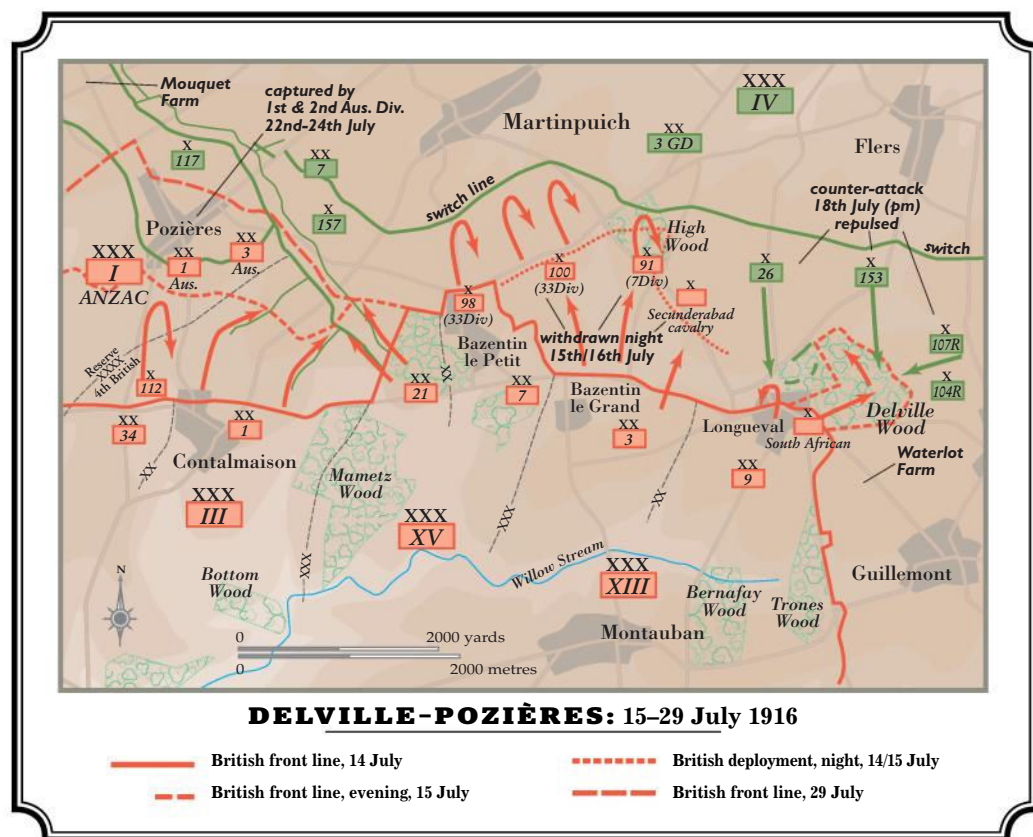
BATTLE FOR THE WOODS

Hard Pounding

SAT 15 JUL – FRI 15 SEP



Australian gunners of a 9.2 in howitzer battery at Fricourt supporting the attack on Pozières on 7 August 1916



The South African Infantry Brigade formed part of the 9th (Scottish) Division, whose task on 14 July had been to secure Longueval and Delville Wood. That morning, the brigade numbered 121 officers and 3,032 soldiers. When the roll was called seven days later, only 29 officers and 751 soldiers answered.

Delays in taking Longueval and Waterlot Farm, thanks to the stubborn German defence, meant that the South Africans, who had been told to take Delville Wood “at all costs”, did not start taking it until 5am on 15 July. The 154-acre wood was a tangle of fallen trees, thick undergrowth and shell craters. By midday, the brigade had cleared the wood and reached the perimeter everywhere except the north-west corner.

Digging in was hard among the tree roots, and the South Africans had to beat off a number of counter-attacks. Attempts on 16 and 17 July to take the north-west corner failed with heavy casualties. It was too close to their own troops to use artillery, so only trench mortars could be used to support the attacks while the enemy continued to counter-attack.

On the evening of 17 July, a massive bombardment was unleashed on the South Africans, which lasted until 3.30pm the following

afternoon. At times 400 shells a minute fell in the small area of the wood, as nine German battalions massed for the assault. To the astonishment of the Germans, the handful of surviving South Africans repelled attack after attack and continued to do so with bayonets after their ammunition ran out.

Eventually, small parties of South Africans filtered back to a strongpoint established by Lieutenant Colonel Thackeray in the centre of the wood, where they continued to resist all attempts by the Germans to clear them out entirely. Had the South Africans failed, the whole British right flank would have been vulnerable to attack. Another six weeks of hard fighting were to pass before the whole of Delville Wood was in British hands.

High Wood was not occupied by the Germans until late on 14 July, it could have been taken by the Allies had reserves been deployed earlier. The wood was favourably sited for defence on the brow of a hill at the top of a long, open slope. The

Germans fought ferociously to keep it and it did not fall until 15 September, by which time four British divisions had been shattered in attempts to take it.

The fortified village of Pozieres, controlling the Bapaume Road and the rear approaches to the Thiepval Plateau had resisted four attacks since 1 July. The next attempt to seize it was by the 1st Australian Division, in Gough's Reserve Army, with a night attack which started at 12.30am on 23 July. After closing with the bayonet and vicious hand-to-hand fighting among the houses and cellars, the Australians reached the main road and dug in. In daylight, they pushed forward and dug in again under a furious bombardment. By 25 July, the Australians had gained the whole village following bitter fighting, at the cost of 5,285 casualties.

The 2nd Australian Division now took over and suffered 3,500 casualties while attempting to push on to Mouquet Farm (known as "Moo Cow Farm"

to the Australians and "Mucky Farm" to the British). On 4 August, another major attack was mounted and by early the next day the Australians were dug in round the site of the windmill, allowing observation towards Courcellette, Mouquet Farm and Thiepval Ridge. Seven further attacks by the 1st, 2nd and 4th Australian Divisions pushed the line up to, but not including, Mouquet Farm, and by 31 August the line was drawn within 700 yards of Thiepval. Six weeks of fighting had cost the Australians 23,000 casualties. Such a figure was nearly as many as the number lost in eight whole months at Gallipoli.

August and early September saw many other piecemeal, narrow-front attacks on the Fourth and Reserve Army fronts, with mixed results. These included the capture of Guillemont by 20th (Light) Division on 3 September, after a battle that had occupied five divisions over a period of almost a month. The 16th (Irish) Division finally took Ginchy on 9 September, at a cost of over 4,300 casualties.

A series of French attacks in July had produced some hard-won gains, some of which were subsequently lost to German counter-attacks. Between 3 and 14 September, French Sixth Army achieved considerable initial success. But bad weather slowed their progress towards the end of this period.

By 15 September, all was set for a major British attack, with the aim of achieving a break through south of the Bapaume Road.



ABOVE: The Australian 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions were engaged at the battle of Pozieres, costing the Australian Army more casualties than in any other engagement before or since. The memorial on the site of the windmill marks a ridge more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other spot on earth



ABOVE: Shoulder title for the 1st South African Infantry Brigade



Soldiers of the 47th Brigade 16th (Irish) Division being transported out of the line by French trucks after assisting the 20th (Light) Division with the capture of Guillemont on 3 September 1916



Sergeant Claude Charles Castleton VC

On 28-29 July 1916 during a night attack near Pozieres, the infantry was temporarily driven back by the intense machine gun fire from the enemy trenches. Many wounded were left in no man's land lying in shell holes. Sergeant Castleton, 5th Company, Machine Gun Corps, the Australian Imperial Force, went out twice in the face of this extreme fire, and each time brought in a wounded man on his back. He went out a third time and was bringing in another wounded man when he was himself hit in the back and killed instantly.

ITEM 25

Haig's secret 1 August report to Sir William Robertson on the progress of the Somme battle during July, including transcripts of messages from General Fritz von Below, commander of the German Second Army.

366 70 3

SECRET

G.A.B. 90.

The Chief of the
Imperial General Staff.

As requested by you, I submit the following summary of my views on the present situation for the information of the War Committee.

1. The results of the Allied offensive on the west, which has now lasted just over a month, are as follows:-

(a) The pressure on VERDUN has been relieved.

The Germans have withdrawn not less than six divisions, besides heavy guns, which had either been engaged, or were apparently intended to be used as reinforcements, at VERDUN. The attack on the left bank of the MOUSE has quite died down. The French are holding their own successfully on the right bank, and amongst other indications of the curtailment of the enemy's means of pressing his attack there has been a considerable lessening of his aerial activity in the VERDUN area. I am assured that the situation is no longer regarded with serious anxiety by the French military authorities. The moral effect of this on the French army and the French people has undoubtedly been considerable. If VERDUN had fallen - as the French military authorities told me must occur if the British offensive were delayed beyond the date finally chosen for it - the effect in France would have been very serious to the Allied cause.

(b) The successes achieved by Russia during the last month

*Vide attached statement marked I.a. 16439.

375 B.

(Annexe to G.H.Q. Summary of 30th July, 1916.)
1a/16507.

ORDER OF THE DAY by General von BLOW,
COMMANDING 2nd ARMY.

(1). 3rd July, 1916.

The decisive issue of the war depends on the victory of the 2nd Army on the SOMME. We must win this battle in spite of the enemy's temporary superiority in artillery and infantry. The important ground lost in certain places will be recaptured by our attack after the arrival of reinforcements. For the present, the important thing is to hold on to our present positions at any cost and to improve them by local counter-attacks.

I forbid the voluntary evacuation of trenches. The will to stand firm must be impressed on every man in the Army. I hold Commanding Officers responsible for this. The enemy should have to carve his way over heaps of corpses. Every available means must be utilized to push forward the construction of the front line, of intermediate lines behind the principal salients, and of defensive lines in rear. These rear lines of defence must be constructed on the reverse slopes, in order that their position and the details of their final construction may be concealed from the enemy's view.

I require Commanding Officers to devote their utmost energies to the establishment of order behind the front.

(Sgd) v. B e l o w .

(2). 16th July, 1916.

His Majesty the Emperor and King, in the course of his visit to-day to Army Head-Quarters, has been pleased to express his great satisfaction with the heroic resistance offered by the 2nd Army to an enemy greatly superior in numbers.

His Majesty is fully convinced that his glorious troops will continue to stand firm and that they will master the enemy's assaults by irresistible dash in the attack, by immovable tenacity in the defence.

Officers and men may be proud of the unshaken confidence placed in them by their Supreme Chief. Let each one in his sphere continue to merit that confidence.

This order will be circulated to all units of the Army.

(Sgd) v. B e l o w .

370

1a/16468.

NOTE
on
THE RESULTS OF THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME
DURING THE MONTH OF JULY.

1. TROOPS EMPLOYED.-

The number of troops maintained by the Germans on the Western front has varied between 116 and 125 divisions during the past six months. At present it stands at 120½.

At the commencement of the battle 8 of these divisions held the sector of the line attacked with 2 divisions in close reserve at CAMBRAI and ST. QUENTIN.

Up to the 21st July this number had increased to a total of 20 divisions employed by the Germans to resist the attack. The extra divisions have had to be drawn from every part of the Western front.

This figure of 20 divisions employed during one month must be compared with the total number of divisions (viz. 20½) used by the Germans in the five months of the attack on VERDUN from February up to July.

It will be noted that in one month Germany has had to put in nearly as many divisions to resist our offensive as she employed herself during five months in her own effort to take VERDUN.

A diagram is attached showing the fluctuation in strength of the Germans along the whole of the Western front

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front during July. It will be observed that the numbers of men per yard used by the enemy for the defence of the SOMME front is now greater than that employed at the commencement of the month on the VERDUN front, when the German attack was at its fiercest.

Six German divisions which had already fought and suffered very severely in the VERDUN area, and had been withdrawn to rest and reform, had to be again employed in the SOMME battle. Allowing for this, 20½ divisions of the total German force of 120½ divisions on the Western front (i.e., approximately 20%) have been engaged, and have undoubtedly suffered severely in one or other of these great battles.

Assuming the wastage in divisions to continue at the same rate for another six weeks, then, theoretically, every German division on the Western front will have been employed, and the enemy's power of resistance on the Western front will have been weakened accordingly.

2. SUBSISTENCE.-

The following data are available:-

(a) Between the 1st and 27th July, not less than 166 hospital trains were observed to move from Belgium to Germany. Allowing for unobserved hours, this represents at least 20,000 badly wounded men.

(b) The total number of prisoners taken by the Allies now amounts to 26,500.

(c) All evidence points to an exceptionally large number of German dead.

While

month would almost certainly have been brought to a speedy termination had the Germans been free to reinforce their Western front considerably, as they certainly would have been but for the Allied offensive on the Western front.

(c) The proof given to the world that the Allies are capable of making and maintaining a vigorous and combined offensive, and of driving from the strongest positions the enemy's best troops, has raised the belief of the armies in their own power to achieve victory and in the power of their Governments to organize it. There is evidence that it has shaken the faith of the Germans, of their friends, and of doubting neutrals in the invincibility of Germany, and that it has impressed on the world England's strength and determination, and the fighting power of the British race. The experience and increased self-confidence gained in the recent successful operations by our new armies, many of them until then untried in such fierce fighting, is also an asset of considerable value.

(d) Our successes in the West have not only had the moral results claimed above, but they have inflicted very heavy material losses on the enemy. Exact figures cannot be given, but there is ample demonstration that many thousands of German dead have been left on the ground which we are now in occupation of. Further statistics regarding the enemy's losses are given in the note annexed hereto*, to which I invite the careful attention of the War Committee.

(e) In short, there can be no doubt that the moral and material results of the events of the last month have brought the Allies a considerable distance forward on the way to victory and that the maintenance of a steady offensive pressure on the enemy's main fronts will result eventually in his complete overthrow.

The

The enemy still fights strongly, but evidence is not wanting that this is due rather to a realization of the danger of defeat than to confidence in his power to win; and the conviction is apparent in the British Army, and, I believe, in all the Allied armies, that the enemy is already partially beaten and that all that is now required is unrelenting effort to turn the scale finally. In this connection the attached copy (marked B) of a captured document giving "Orders of the Day" issued by a highly-placed German commander, shows how seriously the SOMME operations are regarded by the Germans. Moreover, the great moral and material effects on the enemy's troops of our artillery fire and of the vigour and determination of our attacks are fully established by other documents captured, as well as by the statements of prisoners, both officers and men.

2. From the above, the principle on which we should continue to act is clear. Under no circumstances would it be possible to relax our efforts in this battle without prejudicing, probably fatally, the offensive of our Allies and their hopes of victory. We must, and we can, maintain our offensive, and it is essential that we should prove to our Allies, to our enemies, and to neutral Powers, our ability and our determination to do so.

Our losses in the last month's very heavy fighting - totalling to about 150,000 more than they would have been if we had not attacked - cannot be regarded as unduly heavy, or as sufficient to justify any anxiety as to our ability to continue the offensive. Both the enemy and our Allies have borne far heavier losses than this without being turned from their purpose, and, moreover, our ranks have been filled up again and our troops are still in excellent heart.

It

It is my intention -
(a) To maintain a steady, methodical pressure, giving the enemy no rest and no respite from anxiety;
(b) To push my attack strongly whenever and wherever the state of my preparations and the general situation make success sufficiently probable to justify me in doing so, but not otherwise;
(c) To secure against counter-attack each advantage gained and prepare thoroughly for each fresh advance.

Proceeding thus I expect to be able to maintain the offensive well into the autumn and to inflict on the enemy material and moral losses which will amply recompense us for our own losses.

It would not be justifiable to calculate on the enemy's resistance being completely broken by these means without another campaign next year. But, even if another campaign prove to be necessary, the enemy will certainly enter on the coming winter with little hope left of being able to continue his resistance successfully through next spring and summer, and I am confident that it will prove beyond his power to do so provided the Allies maintain their determination to fight on together, vigorously, to a successful conclusion.

General,
Commanding-in-Chief,
British Armies in France.

While any estimate must be largely speculative, it is not unduly sanguine to approximate the total German casualties at certainly not less than 150,000.

3. GERMAN REINFORCEMENT BY NEW--

Accurate figures are not possible. It is, however, established that the whole of the 1916 Glass, and a large proportion of the 1917 Glass are already at the front. To meet the drain of men up to the end of the year, Germany can only rely on--

The remainder of the 1917 Glass, probably	=	200,000 men
Returned wounded, probably	=	100,000 men
TOTAL:		300,000 men

The 1917 Glass have undergone training now for about four months. It is estimated that the 1918 Glass will not be ready to take the field before January, 1919.

The figure of 300,000 has to be distributed between the Eastern and Western fronts. On a percentage of strength (viz. 80 divisions to 130 divisions), 200,000 will be available for the Western front.

Under ordinary conditions on the Western front, i.e., when no battle is in progress, the casualties per month in a division of the German Army probably amount to about 200 per month, or a total of 69,000 for six weeks for the 90 divisions on the Western front not employed in the SOMME battle.

Assuming that the battle on the SOMME is continued for another 6 weeks with the same intensity as during the past month, the German casualties in

this

this battle alone for these extra six weeks will presumably not be less than 160,000. Adding this to the 69,000 for the remainder of the divisions during the six weeks, it will be seen that by the middle of September the total available resources in trained men of Germany for the Western front for the remainder of the year will have been exceeded by 27,000.

4. CO-OPERATION WITH OPERATIONS ON OTHER FRONTS--

Both in 1914 and 1918, Germany, owing to her central position, was enabled to move troops from one front to the other, either to meet pressure exerted by the Allies, or herself to exert pressure on one or other front.

During the last month, the successes of the Russians against the Austrians would have given the Germans every reason to reinforce the Western front by large bodies of troops drawn from the Western front, if it had not been for the pressure exerted by the battle of the SOMME.

The 19 divisions which have been thrown into the SOMME battle to bring the 11 already there up to the 30 who are now opposing us, would obviously have been available to reinforce the Eastern front. With reinforcements up to this amount, it is more than probable that the Russian offensive would have been checked at its inception.

5. STRENGTH OF THE ALLIES AT PRESENT--

At the present moment, Germany has on the SOMME front an equivalent of 30

divisions

divisions. The allies on the same front have massed considerably superior forces in men and guns, and they can maintain their superiority.

SUMMARY--

The effect of the offensive on Germany may, therefore, be summed up as follows:-

- Germany has had to draw troops from the whole extent of her Western front to meet the threat.
- She has been forced to employ defensively a strength in men per yard exceeding that which she was able to employ for the offensive operations on the VERDUN front.
- In spite of such reinforcements it is proved possible for the Allies to maintain a superiority of numbers and of guns in the battle.
- Owing to the battle, Germany has been unable to move troops to meet the Russian offensive in the East. Had she been able to move these troops, which calculations show would amount to 19 divisions, it is more than probable that the Russian offensive would have been unable to make progress.
- The German offensive on the VERDUN front appears to have been definitely postponed, if not entirely abandoned.
- Germany has suffered losses far in excess of the proportion of drafts which she can make available for this front.
- If the battle is maintained for another 6 weeks it appears probable that the German losses will be more than she will be able to make good by the end of the year.

ITEM 26

A sketch showing shells exploding over Delville Wood by Captain Cosmo Clark of the Middlesex Regiment.



ITEM 27

Captain Clark's letter to his parents describing his wounding during the 8 August attack near Delville Wood at Guillemont.

FALKENHAYN DISMISSED

Precipitated by Verdun Failure

On 28 August, General Erich von Falkenhayn threatened to resign. “As you wish,” responded the Kaiser. The disastrous German offensive at Verdun had played a part in the Kaiser’s disillusionment with Falkenhayn’s performance, but intrigue within the German high command involving Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and Field Marshal von Hindenburg, with some input from the Crown Prince, was arguably a more important factor. A

ground swell of complaints from Hindenburg’s Eastern Army command and from within the General Staff itself against Falkenhayn’s grip on the overall war situation, led to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg putting pressure on the Kaiser to dismiss Falkenhayn. The Kaiser brusquely rejected any kind of interference in the command of “his army”.

At this point it was Falkenhayn’s misfortune to tell the supreme warlord (the Kaiser) that Romania would remain neutral until after the September harvest. On 27 August, that country declared war on Austria-Hungary, adding 600,000 troops to the enemies of the Central Powers. The Kaiser invited Hindenburg and his chief of staff, General Erich von Ludendorff, to his headquarters to seek their advice on this



ABOVE: A German wound medal awarded to soldiers wounded in the First World War



LEFT: The decomposed corpse of a German soldier, eaten by rats, at Verdun



Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg

Hindenburg was brought back from retirement on 22 August 1914, aged 67, with Ludendorff as his Chief of Staff. He took over the Eighth Army, which was in retreat in East Prussia after a rapid Russian advance. The ensuing victories at Tannenberg (August 1914), and the Masurian Lakes (September 1914), established Hindenburg as the saviour of Prussia. They were followed by victory at Lodz (November 1914) and the fall of Warsaw in August 1915, by which time Hindenburg was Commander in Chief of all German forces in the East.

BELOW: German troops in East Prussia in the early part of the war





Soldiers of the Regiment Infanterie Colonial du Maroc (RICM) occupy the ruins of the village of Fleury on 20 June 1916



General Erich von Ludendorff

Closely involved with the Schlieffen Plan before the outbreak of the First World War, Ludendorff was sent in August 1914 as Deputy Chief of Staff to Bülow's Second Army, with an advance guard of six brigades to seize Liège ahead of the main force. He took charge of operations at a key moment and was credited with the surrender of the fortress zone at Liège. After this, Ludendorff was Hindenburg's right-hand man, and as First Quartermaster General from August 1916, he increasingly took charge of the German war effort.



Soldiers of a battalion of the 414th Infantry Regiment going over the top to attack Vaux-Chapitre on 3 August 1916

“All those who criticise the dispositions of a general ought first to study military history, unless they have themselves taken part in a war in a position of command”

— General Erich von Ludendorff

unwelcome development. Falkenhayn insisted that the Kaiser could have only one military adviser and, that if he sought Hindenburg's advice, he would resign.

On 29 August, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg was appointed Chief of Staff of the Armies in the Field of the German Empire. With him came Ludendorff as “First Quartermaster General” (a post that he created), a confusing title to us today because of the connotation the word “quartermaster” has of administration, stores, and blanket-stacking. In fact, Ludendorff was much more than a chief of staff. He made it clear that he would share fully in the responsibility for all decisions and measures to bring the war to a successful conclusion, and in a relationship with Hindenburg quite different from that normal between a commander and his chief of staff. They worked in tandem to direct Germany's war effort, with Ludendorff making decisions that no chief of staff would usually contemplate.

On 31 August, the Kaiser presided over a conference to reassess the war situation. After the failure of the Germans to inflict defeat on the Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland, the navy pushed for a resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. Hindenburg suggested that this should wait until Romania had been crushed. Ludendorff chimed in to remark that as Italy had just declared war on Germany, and Germany had declared war on Romania, the Empire had enough enemies already without risking bringing in the USA, and even Holland and Denmark, by

sinking merchant shipping without warning. Before he even visited the Western Front or assessed what was needed there, Ludendorff ordered an end to the Verdun offensive; in this move he was fully supported by the Crown Prince, who by now had a new chief of staff.

Having complained to his father that Falkenhayn and Knobelsdorf were intriguing behind his back to continue the Verdun offensive, the latter had been packed off to command a corps in Russia. His replacement, General von Luttwitz, the Crown Prince remarked, “entered into my ideas rapidly and without reservations”.

On 5 September, Hindenburg and Ludendorff visited the Western Front, as the encouraging news came in of the first of a series of crushing defeats being inflicted on the Romanians by General August von Mackensen. There is no doubt that the nature of the war on the Western Front came as a shock to Hindenburg and Ludendorff, as it was so different from the mobile operations over vast distances to which they had become accustomed since taking command in the East in August 1914. “I began to realise what a task the Field Marshal and I had undertaken in our new spheres,” commented Ludendorff.

They were to make many changes, including infantry tactics, methods of defence, better infantry-artillery co-operation and use of air support. These, and the results of their other innovations would take time to manifest themselves. Meanwhile, the British were working on some new ideas of their own.

BRITISH ARTILLERY

Slide Rule Gunners

In the First World War and in most other wars since, artillery and mortars, not machine guns, have caused the most casualties. Of the wounds inflicted on British soldiers throughout the First World War, shells and mortars inflicted 58.5 per cent, rifles and machine guns 39 per cent, bombs and grenades 2.2 per cent and bayonets 0.3 per cent. Not only did the killing power of artillery come as a shock to the British in 1914, but they were also forced to use their own guns in a new way.

In the British army, the designation “field artillery” was reserved for Royal Field Artillery (RFA) or Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) batteries that were equipped with guns from 13-pounders up to 60-pounder heavy field guns. The Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA), despised as “slide-rule gunners”, manned everything bigger, from 6-in siege howitzers to 18-in railway howitzers. The Field artillerymen were trained to fire in the direct role and their ammunition was designed for use against troops in the open. Only the RGA, with their fortress guns and pieces designed for siege work, practised indirect fire.



ABOVE: Royal Artillery cap badge

In May 1914, Captain Hill of the RGA was greeted with derisive laughter when he predicted in a lecture that, within two months of the outbreak of a war, field artillery would be making corrections for meteorological variations. His implication was that the field artillery would be firing indirectly, that is at targets that the gun-layer could not see, and that they would have to

allow for temperature and high-altitude winds affecting the flight of the shell.

Experience in the 1914 and 1915 battles showed that in the event of an attack it was necessary for the artillery to breach obstacles, or neutralise the troops covering them; to engage the enemy guns with counter-battery (CB) fire to destroy or neutralise them; and to fire at unseen enemy targets in depth to protect the infantry once they had moved forward.

To undertake these tasks, large quantities of artillery were needed. On 1 July, the Fourth Army alone deployed 1,493 guns of all types. The whole BEF in 1914 had just 410 guns, the heaviest being 60-pounders, with no RGA batteries, firing mostly shrapnel, and only a few high-explosive (HE) shells. As well as large numbers of guns, it was necessary to have long-range guns firing heavy shells; from 6-in guns with a 112-lb shell, up to 18-in howitzers firing a 2,500-lb shell out to a distance of 22,300 yards.

The type of shell and how it was fused was important. The shrapnel shell, filled with small metal balls, was fused to explode in the air just



8-inch howitzers of the 39th Siege Battery RGA in the Fricourt-Mametz valley in August 1916



A 12-inch howitzer being prepared for action



Empty 18-pound shell cases and boxes fired by one British division in the bombardment of Fricourt



Trucks delivering heavy shells from the railhead to an ammunition dump

over the target. To begin with shrapnel was judged the best available means of cutting barbed wire because the fuses on HE shells, in contrast, detonated after the shell had buried itself in the ground. This means that the force of its explosion was channelled directly upwards, having relatively little impact on the wire.

An instantaneous, or graze, fuse was introduced, after the Somme battles as a direct result of experiences there. This detonated the shell immediately as it hit the ground, cutting the wire very effectively, in addition to terrifying the occupants of fortifications, which shrapnel failed to do. Graze-fused shells also produced a shallow crater, so making the terrain easier to attack across. The 9th (Scottish) Division at Longueval on 14 July used HE shells for their creeping barrage, and even with the old fuse this was

deemed to be better than shrapnel and set a popular trend.

As the Somme battle progressed, the value of using neutralising fire (to keep defenders cowering in their dugouts until just before the attackers arrived), rather than destructive fire, was better understood. A "dose" of neutralising fire, with the attacking infantry close behind, "leaning on" the barrage, used less ammunition, did not churn up the ground as much and gave the enemy little warning of attack.

Exploiting the full potential of artillery demanded better command and control, more accurate spotting and the use of air photography. These and a host of other innovations were first used during the Somme battles, or were learned as a result of experience in those battles, and subsequently put to use in 1917 and 1918.

ENTER THE TANK

Flers-Courcelette

FRI 15 SEP – FRI 22 SEP

An enthusiastic supporter of the new weapon, Haig had asked for 150 tanks for the first day of the Somme. But tanks were not available until mid-September, and even then only 49 were available.

The tank of 1916 was very different from its namesake today. Its maximum speed was 3.7 mph, but it more usually went about 2 mph, less than a steady walking pace. The engine and clattering tracks were so noisy that the crew of one officer and seven soldiers had to communicate with each other by hand signals. It was difficult to see outside. Exhaust and cordite fumes slowly asphyxiated the crew, who were hurled about as the tank lurched over even minor obstacles, and who were thrown into heaps if negotiating a major one.

Artillery shells penetrated the thin armour easily, especially when the Germans learned to fire at these beasts over open sights. Even small-arms fire caused flakes of metal to “splash off” inside the tank, which then whizzed around killing and wounding the occupants, and damaging machinery. The 1916 tank was in effect just a mobile pill box, which on a good day might keep up with, or occasionally outstrip, the

infantry; which was good at flattening wire and could sometimes knock out enemy machine guns or strongpoints. It was definitely not the hoped-for instrument of breakout.



ABOVE: leather British tank helmet and visor. This was later withdrawn due to its resemblance to German helmets

The plan for the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, which was to see the first ever use of tanks in war, called for a push by all three corps of Fourth Army and the Canadians of the Reserve Army, with assistance from French Sixth Army on the right. A gap was to be smashed between Morval and Le Sars, which the Cavalry Corps was to exploit to seize Bapaume, before rolling up the German line.

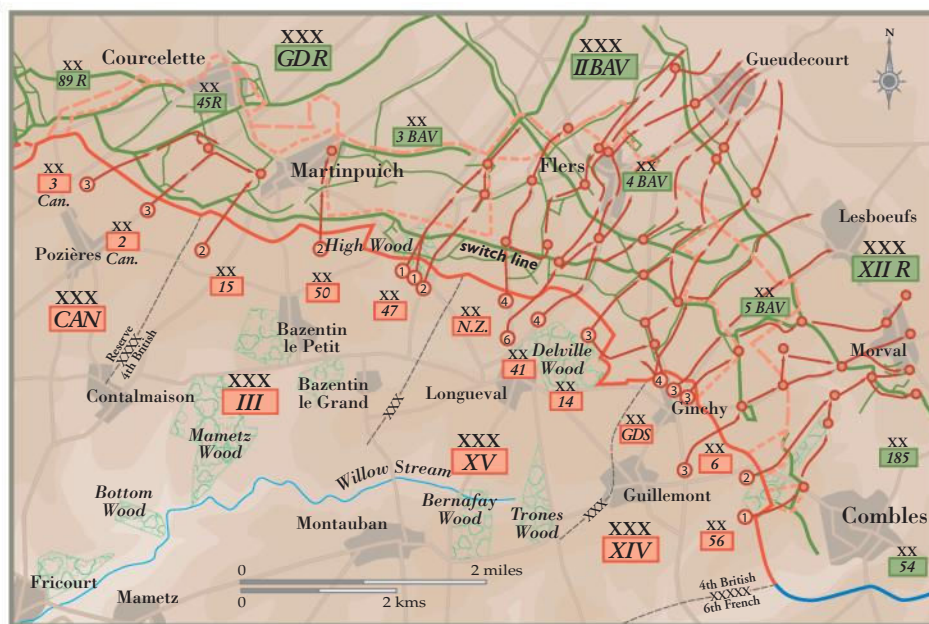
Thanks to breakdowns and other problems, only 32 tanks made the starting positions. The first tank in history to see action was D1, commanded by Captain Mortimore, followed by two companies of the 6th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, in a preliminary operation at Zero minus 1 hour 10 minutes against a pocket of enemy in the south-east corner of Delville Wood. The Germans, astounded by its appearance, began to surrender, but soon a shell – possibly a British one – disabled it.

At 5.40am on 15 September, after an intense three-day bombardment, the fire from 1,238 guns plus divisional mortar batteries rose to a crescendo. At 6.20am, the infantry advanced behind a creeping barrage. The tanks moving with the Canadians astride the Bapaume Road



Colonel Ernest Swinton

Colonel (later Major General) Swinton was a Royal Engineer who served as an official British war correspondent on the Western Front. After seeing a Holt caterpillar tractor towing a gun, he noted that an armoured vehicle with caterpillar tracks might be the answer to wire and machine guns. Maurice Hankey, Secretary of the War Council, passed Swinton's memo on to Churchill and Lloyd George. The latter, who was Minister for Munitions, authorised production of what became known as the tank. Swinton was closely involved in its development and tactical training for the rest of the war.



FLERS-COURCELETTE: 15–22 September 1916

- | | |
|--|--|
| — British front line, morning, 15 Sept | Tanks: → Route of tank advance |
| - - - British front line, evening, 15 Sept | ② Numbers of tanks at point of departure |
| - - - British front line, 22 Sept | ● Objectives and stopping points |

were outstripped by the infantry, who kept pace with the barrage, advancing at 50 yards a minute, to capture Courcellette. Two tanks eventually arrived, frightening the German infantry into surrendering in large numbers.

The 15th (Scottish) Division took Martinpuich with one of their two tanks. After a ding-dong battle, the 47th Division eventually took High Wood, two months after it had been discovered unoccupied and ready for the taking. XIV Corps' three divisions were helped by their tanks to cross belts of uncut wire, but were then held up. The Guards Division, the best in the BEF, was part of XIV Corps' attack on Lesbœufs. Their tanks wandered off, and 1st Guards Brigade was pinned down within 100 yards of the start.

Lieutenant Colonel Campbell led 2nd and 3rd Coldstream in a charge to take the first German line. Ordered to take Lesbœufs, he led his men on to take the German third line, sounding his hunting horn. He was awarded the Victoria Cross. The three divisions of XV Corps, 14th, 41st and New Zealand, also did well, but did not take all of their objectives. The 41st took Flers with the aid of three tanks, one of which, D17 commanded by Lieutenant Hastie, prompted one highly exaggerated report in the British press: "A tank is

A Mark I tank at Elveden, the tank trials and training ground in Norfolk, with early experimental wire netting to keep grenades off the top of the tank



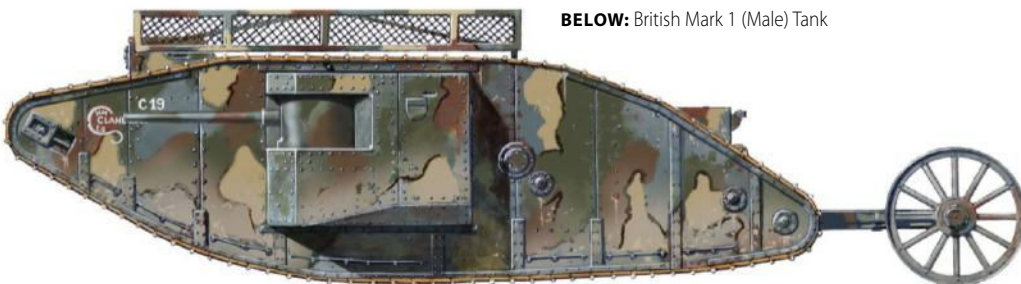
walking up the main street of Flers with the British Army cheering behind." With the capture of Flers, the German line was almost broken. But the Germans quickly plugged the breach with reserves and rained shells down on the village, knocking out four of the six British battalion COs. Twice the ground taken on 1 July had been gained for half the casualties, but breakthrough had not been achieved. Despite the disappointment, Haig requested that 1,000 tanks be delivered as soon as possible.



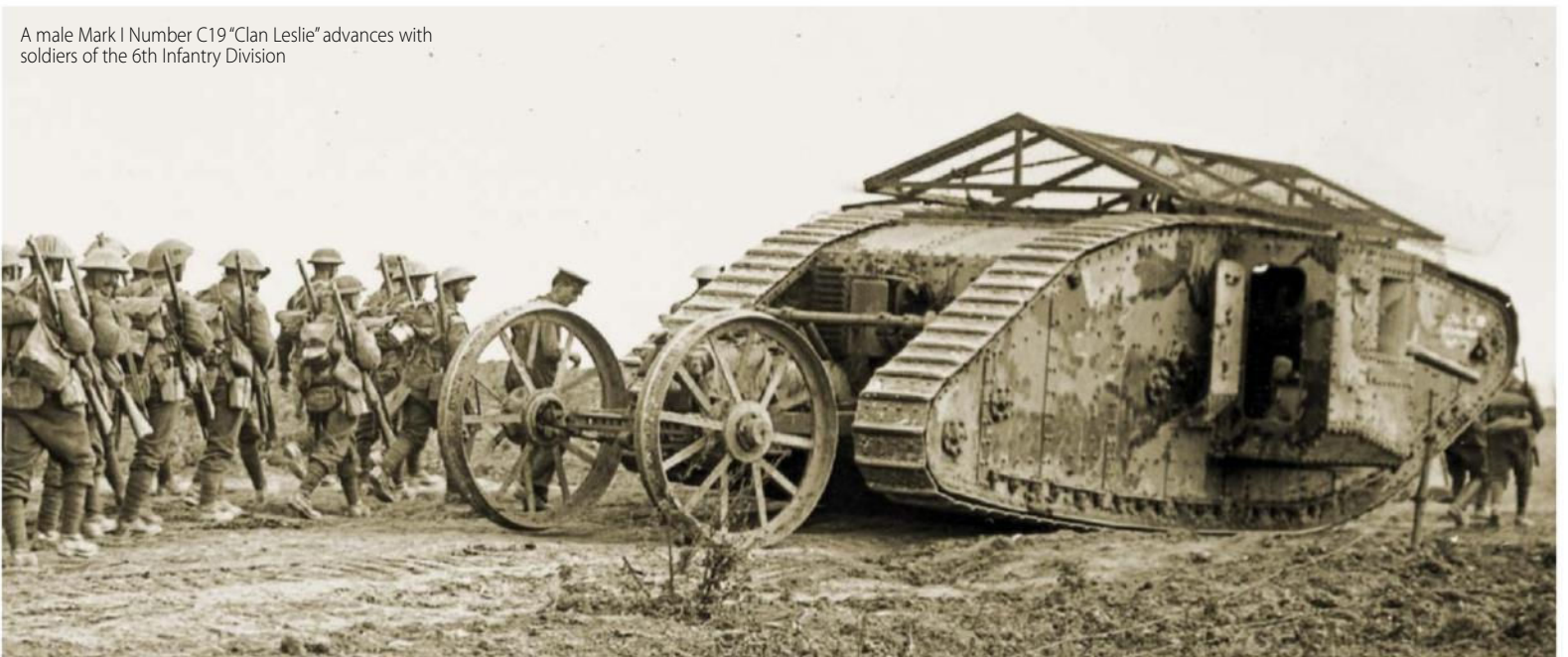
Captain H. W. Mortimore

Mortimore elected to serve with the Royal Naval Division at the outbreak of war. Having served with them at Antwerp, he switched to the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). Finding that he did not enjoy flying, Mortimore transferred with a number of his RNAS comrades to the Heavy Section of the Machine Gun Corps, formed to man the new weapon, the tank. Aged 23, he was the first man in the world to command a tank in battle - a male D1 tank, nicknamed "Daredevil 1".

BELOW: British Mark 1 (Male) Tank



A male Mark I Number C19 "Clan Leslie" advances with soldiers of the 6th Infantry Division



ITEM 28

A handwritten official war diary of 4th Battalion, the Tank Corps, describing the unit's build-up to the 15 September attack, then, tank-by-tank, D Company's actions and casualties.

"C" Form (Duplicate).
MESSAGES AND SIGNALS.

Army Form C 2123 A

No. of Message.....

Service Instructions <i>Piccom Priority</i>		Charges to Pay \$ s. d.	Office Stamp.
Handed in at the..... Office, at <i>2-35 p</i>m.		Received here at <i>4-28 p</i>m.	
TO <i>HQ H/1st Divn.</i>			
Sender's Number.	Day of Month. <i>15</i>	In reply to Number.	AAA

<i>Tank</i> <i>D 17</i> <i>2/1st</i> <i>to</i> <i>having</i> <i>long</i> <i>your</i> <i>D</i> <i>on</i> <i>in</i> <i>has</i> <i>his</i> <i>man</i>	<i>0 16</i> <i>2/1st</i> <i>Brown</i> <i>LONGUEVAL</i> <i>stood</i> <i>as</i> <i>information</i> <i>Coy's</i> <i>fire</i> <i>FLERS</i> <i>a</i> <i>knee</i> <i>aboard</i>	<i>St.</i> <i>Bond</i> <i>are</i> <i>from</i> <i>by</i> <i>possible</i> <i>Capt.</i> <i>Tank</i> <i>and</i> <i>the</i> <i>bullet</i> <i>and</i> <i>seriously</i>	<i>Arnold</i> <i>D. 17</i> <i>returning</i> <i>FLERS</i> <i>as</i> <i>for</i> <i>NIXON</i> <i>is</i> <i>abandoned</i> <i>writer</i> <i>in</i> <i>another</i> <i>injured</i>
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FROM	<i>St. Arnold</i>		
PLACE			
TIME			

Wt. 1753.—A. W. & Co.—40,000 Pads. 6/15.

"C" Form (Original).			Army Form C. 2123.		
MESSAGES AND SIGNALS.			No. of Message		
Prefix <u>SA</u>	Code	Words	Received	Sent, or sent out	Office Stamp
£ s. d.			From <u>Cpd</u>	At	m.
Charges to collect			By <u>Rmott</u>	To	
Service Instructions.			By		
<u>Priority</u> <u>Pigeon</u> <u>2500</u>					
Handed in at			Office	m.	Received
TO			<u>H-H Army</u>		
*Sender's Number	Day of Month	In reply to Number		AAA	
<u>One</u>	<u>15-9-16</u>				
Completed	duty	detailed	for	am	
now	quite	safe	at	S.24 B8½ 6	
but	cannot	now	owing	to	
wanting	new	track	one	side	
all	lugs	lent			
FROM			<u>Cole HML-S C-24</u>		
PLACE & TIME			<u>S24 B8½ 6 10-1am</u>		

* This line should be erased if not required.

Wt. 9771/4004. 75,000 Pads. 10/15. M.C. & Co., Ltd., London. Forms/C.2123.

ITEM 29

Priority pigeon messages sent from tanks during the 15 September attack.

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (Erase heading not required.)				Army Form C. 2118.
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	
Green Dump	15/9/16		Below will be found a small tabulated report of the work of the D'Ag Tanks	
CAPT. H.W. MORTIMORE	14 th Div	D 1	ORDERS RECEIVED	CASUALTIES
	15 th Div		To proceed to S.E. corner of DELVILLE Wood and at 5.30 AM. on Sept. 15 th to attack and clear HOP ALLEY. Then endeavour to overtake advancing Infantry and proceed with them to further objectives.	N.L.
LT. H.R. BELL	15 th Div	D 2	Did not go into action on Sept 15	
	16 th Div		On Sept 15. When going up to starting line car became detached & took no part in action. Car was eventually dug out.	Sept 15 th 1 Officer wounded (at this). HE Shanks outside tank. Oct 7 th 3 D/R Wounded Hit by HE & 4 Chapin's left car had been abandoned & one were returning to barracks.
	23 rd Div		Oct 7 th To proceed from M. 22 C. 7. 1. to LE SARRS via THE TANGLE & SUNKEN Road M. 16 C. 7. 1.	

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (Erase heading not required.)				Army Form C. 2118.
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	
GREEN DUMP	15/9/16		Major Summers attended a conference at IV Corps. Captain Mann was detailed to command Tanks of III Corps who attended a conference at III Corps HQ.	
	16/9/16	4pm	Preliminary bombardment commenced Tanks moved from LOOP to Position of assembly GREEN DUMP arriving at midnight. LT Cotes returned on foot to the Loop reporting that he had a broken track. New car was supplied.	
	17/9/16		Our bombardment grew more intense. Crew choppers recommended route up to the trenches found the ground cut up very badly by shell holes. Communications trenches etc. To move Tanks over this ground in the dark would mean heavy work & careful manipulation. This was fully realized by Crew choppers.	
	18/9/16	3pm	Major Summers left Loop & arrived at Green Dump at 3pm. From this hour until 8pm the C.O. was occupied with his choppers running operations & explaining same.	
	19/9/16	8.30pm	Tanks moved off to starting line.	
	20/9/16		Z. day Zero time 6.30 AM Tanks to advance before infantry. Reports came through that Tanks had passed through 2nd & 3rd. Large numbers of prisoners passed Green Dump on their way to cages. At about 4pm our own wounded officers were commenced to arrive at Green Dump.	

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence
Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II,
and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages
will be prepared in manuscript.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information		Remarks and references to Appendices
NAME OF COMMANDER	UNIT TO WHICH ASSIGNED	TANK No	ORDERS RECEIVED	HOW ORDERS WERE CARRIED OUT	CASUALTIES
2 nd LT. W.H. SAMPSON	4 th Div. III Corps	II 13	To proceed from HIGH ALLEY S.H.C. 62. to FLERS LANE M29 d. 6-6 via HIGH WOOD	Advanced with Infantry through HIGH WOOD and when on far side tank was hit by shell & tank caught fire. Crew were ordered to abandon tank. Crew remained in trenches with infantry and worked machine guns	2 O/R Wounded. In tank. O/R wounded by German infantry from shooting through loopholes. German crew at 4 o'clock left tank & returned to trench. 1 O/R left tank when tank caught fire.
2 nd LT G.F. COURT	4 th Div. III Corps	II 14	To proceed from starting line at 5.45 AM ahead of infantry to TEA SUPPORT, then to 1 st objective SWITCH TRENCH. Thence to FLERS AVENUE on to FLERS VILLAGE and on from there to GIRD TRENCH, GIRD SUPPORT, to GUEUDE COURT	The tank advanced from behind FLERS villages on Sept 16 th . The tank has been reported blown up at point N26.II. No news whatever has been received. Tank has since been visited and is now absolutely blown to bits.	1 Officer 7 O/R Missing Have not known.

2449 Wt. W14957/M90 750,000 1/16 J.R.C. & A. Forms/C.2118/12.

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence
Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II,
and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages
will be prepared in manuscript.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information		Remarks and references to Appendices
NAME OF COMMANDER	UNIT TO WHICH ASSIGNED	TANK No	ORDERS RECEIVED	HOW ORDERS WERE CARRIED OUT	CASUALTIES
2 nd LT H.G. PEARSON	N.Z. Div. 15 th Corps	II 11	Same orders as for II 10 (Lt. Darby) but did not stop on CREST TRENCH	When this tank reached FLERS and failed to find any Germans the officer reported to an NZ officer who asked that tank might protect his flank. Lt. Pearson took up this position & remained there till 7.45 PM. Tank was then asked to go forward to meet expected counter attack and remained forward till 6 A.M. next day (16 th Sept.). Tank advanced with infantry at 9 A.M. & carried on till hit by H.E. shell which burst under belly of car blowing in the gas box. Lt. Pearson remained in tank for some while using his Vickers gun on enemy & also took one Vickers gun into the trenches when he had to abandon tank.	3 O/R. Wounded Carried by H.S. stretcher under tank blowing gas box to pieces.
CAPT. G. NIXON	N.Z. Div. 15 th Corps	II 12	Same orders as for II 11 tank (Lt. Pearson)	Orders were carried out as given till tank advanced through FLERS, when on ridge tank was hit, rolling tail out of action. Capt. Nixon decided under these circumstances to withdraw. In withdrawing tank became detached at 4.36 P.M. & during disengagement tank was again hit & caught fire. Crew brought back to camp with 1 man missing.	1 O/R. Missing Lost trace of this man who was returning to camp after having abandoned tank.

2449 Wt. W14957/M90 750,000 1/16 J.R.C. & A. Forms/C.2118/12.

MORVAL

A Partial Success

The Fourth Army objectives for the battle of Flers-Courcelette included Morval and Lesbœufs, while Combles was to be “pinched” out by Fourth Army and the French acting together. None of these was achieved, so further attacks were planned, which were then delayed by bad weather until 25 September.

Zero hour was fixed for 12.35pm to accommodate the French, who were on the right of XIV Corps, next to the British 56th Division and who wanted to take advantage of good morning light for the final stages of the bombardment. Because there would be no darkness to conceal any move forward of tanks to the jump-off line, Rawlinson decided that they would remain in reserve. This turned out to be fortunate, because it allowed the barrage to be continuous along the whole front of the attack and therefore more effective. At Flers-Courcelette, lanes had been left in the barrage to allow the tanks to go ahead of the infantry

without the risk of being hit by friendly artillery and to avoid cutting up the ground too much.

The artillery bombardment was much heavier than the one on 15 September, and Fourth Army was to attack only one German trench line. This combination led to the successful outcome of the battle. On XIV Corps’ front, the Guards Division stormed in with bayonets, while to their right, the 5th, 6th and 56th Divisions also swept forward. Morval eventually fell to the 95th Brigade of the 5th Division, while the southern part of Lesbœufs was taken by the 1st West Yorks of the 18th Brigade, with the remainder of the village being taken by the 1st Guards Brigade.

The 21st Division had been held up by heavy machine gun fire and failed to take Gueudecourt. The next day, a dismounted cavalry patrol entered the village without encountering the enemy, who had withdrawn. On the night of 25 September, orders were issued to the 56th Division to surround Combles the following

“Panting figures with flashing bayonets loomed up beside me and my men tumbled in to the German front line alongside me. I had outrun the lot” - Lieutenant Geoffrey Fildes 2nd Coldstream Guards Ludendorff

MON 25 SEP – THU 28 SEP



General Marie Emille Fayolle

Fayolle was a 62-year-old artillery officer called out of retirement in 1914 to command an infantry division. By February 1916, he commanded French Sixth Army. His skilful use of artillery and infantry led to a substantial defeat of the Germans in his sector on 1 July. Not averse to copying his allies, he used the BEF’s system of fixed and creeping barrages. In the crisis of March 1918, Haig was glad to note that Fayolle, now commanding Army Group North, was to his immediate right.



Supporting infantry goes over the top following the assault waves at the Battle of Morval on 25 September 1916

morning in co-operation with General Fayolle's French Sixth Army.

However, information gleaned from a German officer captured by 5th Division came in at about 10pm indicating that the Germans were about to evacuate the village in the night. This matched a similar report received in XIV Corps headquarters from the French. Patrols from the 168th Brigade of the 56th Division therefore carefully probed forward and, in the early hours of 26 September, the 1/ 14th Londons (London Scottish) linked up with French troops in the town, taking 500 Germans prisoner. After this there was limited fighting along the front, but on

28 September, after a request by General Foch, part of the line then held by the 20th and 56th Divisions of XIV Corps was handed over to the French. With Morval and Lesboeufs under their control, the French had more room for manoeuvre around what was now a sharply angled salient, and the battle of Morval finally came to an end.

Tanks played no part in the success, which owed much to the increased expertise of the Fourth Army at what today would be called the operational level, fighting a corps and army battle. The British Army was pushing along up the learning curve.



The 12th Glosters, 5th Division advancing in support of the attack on Morval. Their rifles are slung and bayonets are not fixed which indicates that they are not assaulting



ABOVE: Cap badge of the 14th County of London Battalion (London Scottish)



ABOVE: The Mills Bomb, the first safe and reliable time-fused hand grenade issued to the British Army



Private T. A. Jones VC

Jones (above right) of the 1st Battalion the Cheshire Regiment was digging a trench with his company near Morval, when he came under sniper fire. Declaring, "If I'm to be killed, I'll be killed fighting, not digging," he set forth to hunt the sniper. Five bullets pierced his tunic and helmet before he spotted his assailant and proceeded to shoot him dead. Two of the enemy waving white flags took pot shots at him, until he despatched them too. He then proceeded to rush the enemy trench, single-handedly taking 102 German prisoners.



ABOVE: An old German position, the Combles Trench, taken by the 56th Division as part of the Battle of Morval, with abandoned rifles, grenades, helmets and bodies

THIEPVAL

Pushing Along the Learning Curve

TUE 26 SEP – SAT 30 SEP

Although the battle of Flers-Courcelette had not accomplished the hoped-for breakthrough, Haig was convinced that the German reserves were almost exhausted and that now was the time for Gough's Reserve Army to strike a hard blow. This was doubly necessary in view of Fourth Army's slow progress on the right of the BEF and the need to maintain pressure on the Germans. As soon as the Thiepval Ridge had been secured, Haig planned an eastward advance on Serre from Hébuterne supported by tanks, combined with an attack north-east from the Beaumont Hamel valley.

Gough's plan was to attack on a frontage from Courcelette to the Schwaben Redoubt, with Major General Currie's 1st Canadian Division, and Major General Turner's 2nd Canadian Division on the right, and the 18th and 49th Divisions of Lieutenant General Jacob's II Corps on the left. Zero Hour was determined to be at 12.35pm on 26 September.

The village of Thiepval, by that time just a ruin sitting on top of massive, deep shelters, had been the scene of a bloody repulse on 1 July. It was also necessary to take Mouquet Farm ("Mucky Farm"), another heap of rubble, set over a warren of underground tunnels and dugouts that had

withstood numerous attacks by Australians, British and Canadians.

At Zero Hour in the Canadian sector of the attack, the shrapnel barrage came down 50 yards in front of the German line and almost immediately German artillery fire bombarded the Canadian front. Some Canadians were pinned in their own trenches, but one battalion reached its objective: the German front line. Eventually, the other Canadian battalions battled their way

forward to seize ground about 1,000 yards from their jump-off positions.

Mouquet Farm fell to the 34th Brigade of 11th Division after fierce fighting among the rubble. Both tanks in support ditched before reaching the farm, but the crew of one brought their machine guns into action with good effect. At 5.30pm, the 56 survivors of the "Mucky Farm" garrison surrendered after being winkled out with smoke bombs.



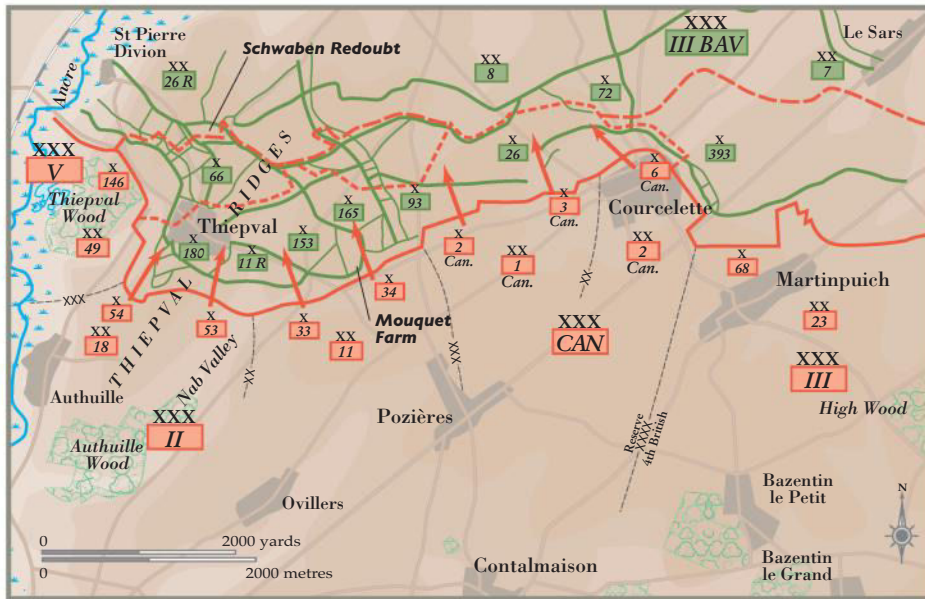
ABOVE: German troops with captured British Lewis guns

BELOW: Soldiers of the Border Regiment in improvised dugouts in Thiepval Wood



Major General Arthur Currie

A school teacher and insurance salesman, Currie served in the militia before the outset of war, rising to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. On the outbreak of war, he was offered command of the 2nd Canadian Brigade, taking it to Belgium in 1915. He took over the 1st Canadian Division in 1915 and took command of the Canadian Corps in June 1917. He was the first Canadian in history to be promoted to general officer rank and was instrumental in establishing the Canadians as a corps d'élite on the Western Front.



THIEPVAL RIDGE: 26–30 September 1916

British front lines: — morning, 26 Sept — evening, 26 Sept — 30 Sept

The capture of Thiepval was undoubtedly the *pièce de résistance* of this battle. Maxse's 18th Division had already made its mark on 1 July and at the taking of Trônes Wood two weeks later. In Maxse's opinion, training and preparation were the keys to success and he took great pains to prepare his brigades, particularly for the task of taking Thiepval and the Schwaben Redoubt, 1,000 yards north of the village.

The assault started well, as the leading waves left their trenches before Zero Hour, thus avoiding the German bombardment. The fighting in Thiepval was waged with rifles, bayonets, bombs and Lewis guns, amid the chaos of

shattered trenches and unsuspected dugouts. Two tanks also did sterling work in support. By nightfall, most of Thiepval was in British hands, mostly thanks to the courage, skill at arms and the enterprise of small groups of men, often led by private soldiers after their officers and NCOs had been killed or wounded. For the most part, the Germans had fought to the death.

The three assaulting battalions of 54th Brigade (11th Royal Fusiliers, 6th Northampton and 12th Middlesex) lost 840 all ranks out of a strength of 2,290. Maxse decided that the assault on the Schwaben Redoubt, originally 54th Brigade's objective, would be delayed until the following



Major General Ivor Maxse

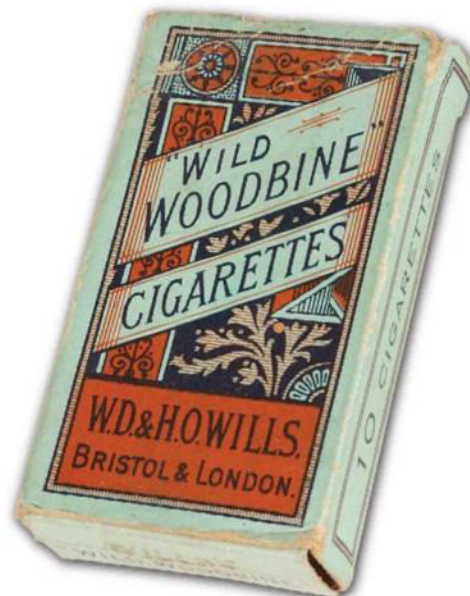
Maxse (GOC 18th Division) had a poor start when Haig criticised his handling of the 1st (Guards) Brigade in the rearguard of the retreat from Mons. However, he was later to turn the 18th (Eastern) Division into one of the elite formations in the BEF. A great trainer and innovator, he believed that the key to success in battle lay in thorough preparation, training and briefing. He became GOC XVIII Corps in 1917, and Inspector General of Training for the last six months of the war.

day and allotted its capture instead to the 53rd Brigade, which had so far suffered less. After bitter close-quarter fighting, involving repeated attacks and counter-attacks that ebbed and flowed over the redoubt, only its southern and eastern sectors remained in British hands. The German hold on the position was not prised loose until 14 October.

Overall, the battle for Thiepval Ridge had gone well; training, preparation, and the proper employment of artillery had paid off. But there was little indication that the Germans were at the end of their tether and the long agony of the Somme was by no means over yet.



Over 17,000 out of a total of about 51,000 Canadians serving in all types of units in France and Flanders were killed, wounded or taken prisoner in the Somme battles of 1916, a loss rate of 33 percent. The Canadian Corps quickly established a well-deserved reputation for its fighting qualities and success in battle.



ABOVE: Formation sign of the 18th (Eastern) Division. The letters "ATN" when pronounced rapidly, sound like "eighteen"

AIRMEN OVER THE SOMME

Attrition in the Air

Before the Somme battle began, the British had learnt from the French experience over Verdun, copying from them such techniques as the use of air contact patrols co-operating with attacking infantry, improved aerial photography, and metal-linked machine gun belts instead of canvas that tended to jam.

Although the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was mainly equipped with DH2 and FE2b “pusher” propeller fighters, they proved themselves capable of competing against the German Fokkers. But when Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) pilots were sent to make up the shortage of RFC crews, they brought their own Nieuports with them, refusing to fly the BE2c aircraft that were all they were offered. Major General Trenchard, commanding the RFC in France, admitted that the aircraft were obsolescent.

Despite this, he was determined to fight the Germans over their own territory. By mid July German aircraft had been driven from the skies. British and French aircraft outnumbered the Germans by three-to-one over the Somme (185 British and 201 French aircraft to 129 German). Aerial spotting for Allied artillery was especially effective and air photography was used to pinpoint targets for the guns. For the first ten weeks, the Germans were unable to interfere, and even towards the end of the battle they could not match the Allied level of air support over the battlefield. German soldiers, machine gunned and bombed from the air and shorn of their own artillery spotters, cursed the British, French and their own air force with equal venom.

The Germans found the aggressive RFC tactics alien; a German pilot, shot down in December 1916 remarked, “To return with-out a fight and the work done, is the task with us.” The RFC sustained heavy losses while maintaining a ceaseless offensive over the German lines. For example, No 70 Squadron, equipped with the new Sopwith 11/2-strutter, lost 47 aircrew in nine weeks. By mid September, Trenchard realised that the Germans were regaining air superiority for two reasons.

First, Germany’s top fighter pilot, Oswald Boelcke, kept languishing in the rear on the Kaiser’s orders, took command of Jagdstaffel 2, one of the newly formed fighter units (“Jastas”), and by personal example on lone, early morning sorties, taught his flyers aggressive tactics and to have “an Englishman for breakfast”. On 28 October, with 40 kills recorded, he fatally crashed

The observer in an FE2b stands to fire a Lewis gun to the rear. Fokker pilots found FE2bs flying in pairs a formidable foe



Captain Albert Ball VC

Captain Albert Ball, the dominant British pilot throughout the Battle of the Somme, was the first in the RFC to score a “hat-trick”, downing three aircraft in three-quarters of an hour. Between 15 and 30 September, with his score at 17, he notched up a further 14 victories. On 7 May 1917, he attacked the Albatros of Lothar von Richtofen (the brother of Manfred), causing it to crash, before he himself crashed behind German lines and died from his injuries. He was awarded the VC posthumously on 8 June 1917 and was made a Chevalier of the Légion d’honneur.

Number 32 Squadron pilots at Vert Galand in 1916 examine a map before takeoff. An observer is sitting in the nacelle of the FE2b





Albatros D.IIs

after a mid-air collision with Erwin Boehme while pursuing the same RFC aircraft over the Somme. His legacy was his example and teaching; his most promising pupil was the German ace Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen.

Second, the Jastas were equipped in September with the new Albatros D.I fighter. Its Mercedes engine, twin synchronised guns, and plywood skin on its fuselage (as opposed to the fabric used by the French and British), made it a tough and fearsome fighter.

Trenchard did not abandon his aggressive doctrine, but asked for better fighters. Unfortunately, the superior Sopwith Pups or French Nieuports were not available in sufficient

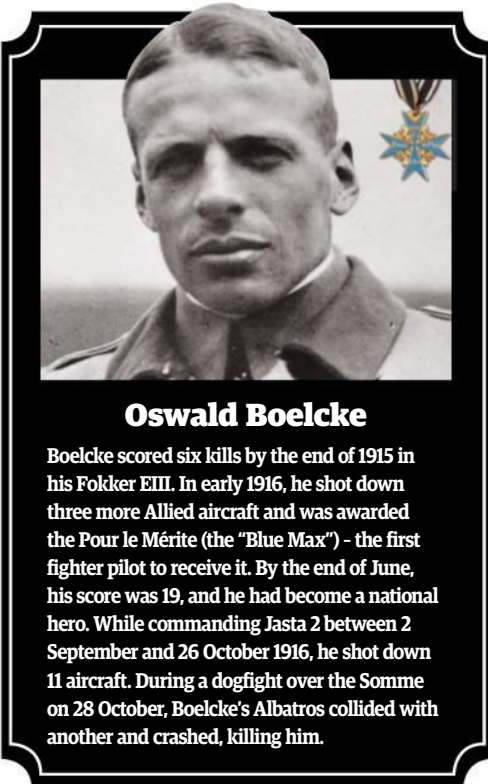
numbers, and the DH2 “pushers” remained in service. Even so, Albert Ball had notched up 30 victories by the end of 1916 flying a Nieuport, having devised the attack from underneath, pulling down his top-wing Lewis gun to fire up into the quarry’s belly.

On 23 November, a week after the end of the Somme battle, the RFC’s Major Lanoe Hawker VC, hunting over German territory in a DH2, was “bounced” by an Albatros. Hawker twisted and turned, trying without success to use the superior agility of the DH2 to bring his single Lewis gun to bear, and eventually breaking off to zigzag towards his own lines and safety. A burst from twin, belt-fed Spandau machine guns hit him in

the head, and he spiralled in just behind the German lines. Manfred von Richthofen had scored his eleventh victory.

The death of Max Immelman, shot down by a British FE2b in June 1916, just before the start of the Somme battle, had presaged the supremacy of the FE2 and the DH2 over the Fokker E.III. In the same way, Hawker’s death, in contrast, signalled the eclipse of the DH2 by the German Albatros. It wasn’t until May 1917 that the next generation of Allied aircraft would tip the balance back again in their favour.

During the Somme battle, 499 British aircrew were killed, wounded or missing, compared with German losses of 359.



Oswald Boelcke

Boelcke scored six kills by the end of 1915 in his Fokker E.III. In early 1916, he shot down three more Allied aircraft and was awarded the Pour le Mérite (the “Blue Max”) – the first fighter pilot to receive it. By the end of June, his score was 19, and he had become a national hero. While commanding Jasta 2 between 2 September and 26 October 1916, he shot down 11 aircraft. During a dogfight over the Somme on 28 October, Boelcke’s Albatros collided with another and crashed, killing him.



BELOW: German Albatros D.II



LEFT: Royal Flying Corps pilots’ wings.



BELOW: British De Havilland DH2

“Now his machine was no longer controllable. It fell.” – Lieutenant Manfred von Richthofen, Jasta 2, Imperial German Air service. He witnessed Boelcke’s death on 28 October 1916

ITEM 30

Lieutenant Macaskie's logbook, noting that he had been attacked and wounded over German-held Bapaume on the evening of 20 July forcing him to land behind Allied lines in Albert.

Date and Hour	Wind Direction and Velocity	Machine Type and No.	Passenger	Time	Height	Course	Remarks
July 12 th 7:55AM	N.W.	F.E.2c 6970	1st Lt. Macaskie	2 hrs 15	10,000	S.E. of the lines.	
" 5:35PM	N.W.	F.E.2c 6975	Thomas	3 hrs	9000	Souchez a Gommecourt	Patrol.
13 th 7:18PM	N.W.	F.E.2c 6970	Thomas	2 hrs 11	9000	Souchez a Gommecourt	Patrol.
19 th 11:20	N	F.E.2c 6351	Thomas	2 hrs 10	9000	Boisieux	Drifted on bomb.
20 th 6:0PM	N.W.	F.E.2c	Thomas	1 hr 20m	9500	Bapaume	Right with doctor, bolt patrol tanks hit. Self hit in right leg and arm. forced landing near Albert.
Total time solo for week				10-57			
" " flown " "				10-57			
" " Solo in R.F.C.				53-47			

PILOT'S FLYING LOG BOOK

Name D.S.C. Macaskie

Rank _____

Regiment or Corps ROYAL FLYING CORPS

J. L. & S. Ltd. - W 549-100 Bk. - 7-15.

Date and Hour	Wind Direction and Velocity	Machine Type and No.	Passenger	Time	Height	Course	Remarks
<u>Machines Flown</u>							
80 HP Gnome N.A.C. Pusher Seaplane.							
Maurice Farman Shorthorn.							
80 HP Gnome Caudron							
80 HP Gnome Avro							
70 HP Renault BE 2A							
" " BE 2B							
" " BE 2C.							
100 HP R.A.F. BE 2C.							
Henry Farman 80 HP Gnome							
Vickers Gun Carrier 100 HP Monosopht							
120 HP Beardmore F.E.2B.							
<u>TICKET TAKEN AT</u>							
THE NORTHERN AIRCRAFT SCHOOL							
ON A (Nº 1788 22 nd Sept. 1915)							
N.A.C. BIPLANE 80 HP Gnome.							
<u>SUPER TICKET TAKEN AT</u>							
THE R.F.C. AERODROME DOVER							
ON A (22 nd Sept 1916)							
AVRO 80 HP Gnome							
<u>MACHINES FLOWN IN</u>							
H. FARMAN (S) AVRO 80 Gnome (L) X							
AVRO 150 SUMBEAM(S) BE 2c 70 Renault (L) X							
SOPWITH 80 M Gnome(S) BE 2B 70 Renault (L) X							
WIGHT 200 Cantor (S) BE 2A 70 Renault (L) X							
AVRO 50 Gnome (S) Henry Farman 80 HP Gnome (L) X							
N.A.C. Biplane 80 Gnome (S) Vickers Gun Carrier (L) X							
N.A.C. Pusher Mono 80 Gnome(S) F.E.2D 120 AD. (L) X							
BLERIOT 35 Humber (S) X							
H. FARMAN Shorthorn (L) X							
CAUDRON 80 Gnome (L) X							
SOLO ON THOSE MARKED X							

Log B books to be handed in to the Station Officer each Monday evening, after filing on 2nd day, if not cleared, made up to date as follows:-

Total time flown solo for week.

Total time flown under instruction for week.

Total time flown during week.

Total time flown solo since commencement of flying.



No. 23 SQUADRON,

ROYAL FLYING CORPS.

20th July Thursday.

Dear Mother
Just a line to let
you know how we are going on. yesterday
we went and bombed a town over the lines,
and heavily "archied", one shell burst just
behind my tail, and later another just
underneath, the concussion caused a big
bump. Today if it clears we are going
out again, but at present it is rather
cloudy. I hope you get all my letters
airight. My observer is usually a chap
called Sandys-Thomas. There isn't much
to write about at present. I rode over to
the next aerodrome, on one of the two horses
provided for the R.F.C. officers here, which
is about the only exercise we get.

Heaps of Love

Dan

ITEM 31

A 20 July letter from Lieutenant Macaskie to his mother, describing his bombing raid on the previous day. "Archie" was slang for flak.

SOMME: THE FINAL BATTLES

Transloy Ridges and Ancre

SUN 01 OCT – SUN 19 NOV

After the fall of Thiepval, Haig hoped to advance on a wide front involving the Third, Reserve, and Fourth Armies in a combined offensive. But bad weather made this impossible, and over a period of six weeks there followed a series of savage actions with more limited aims, collectively known as the Battles of the Transloy Ridges (involving Rawlinson's Fourth Army), and the Ancre (fought by Gough's Reserve Army, which was renamed Fifth Army at the end of October).

The New Zealanders, the Australians and the Canadians played key roles in these attacks. In Fourth Army's sector, in deteriorating weather, the British 23rd Division took Le Sars on 7 October, but not the Butte de Warlencourt. Machine guns sited there took a heavy toll on the infantry fighting their way forward, among them the South Africans. The Butte, a 60-foot-high chalk mound, dominated the spur high above the Bapaume Road. It "shone white in the night and

seemed to leer at you like an ogre in a fairy tale" and "loomed up unexpectedly [sic], peering into trenches where you thought you were safe: it haunted your dreams," wrote one officer.

As autumn turned into winter, the weather on the Somme deteriorated, and by mid October conditions were so bad that simply existing was a severe trial. Poor visibility from the air often made spotting for artillery and locating fresh German positions impossible. Mud smothered the shell bursts reducing their effect, and gun barrels worn smooth by continuous firing for months were no longer accurate. Guns sank into the mire, and to move one 18-pounder often needed 12 horses instead of the normal six. Some ammunition was dragged up on sledges improvised from corrugated iron sheets. The infantry arrived at jumping-off positions exhausted, soaked and shivering, before struggling through under heavy fire towards objectives only dimly discerned in the murk.

"Triple squads carrying on short relays were needed to get the stretchers over the ground, so exhausting was the work" - Captain J.C. Dunn DSO, MC, DCM, Medical Officer of the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers



ABOVE: Cap badge for the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion



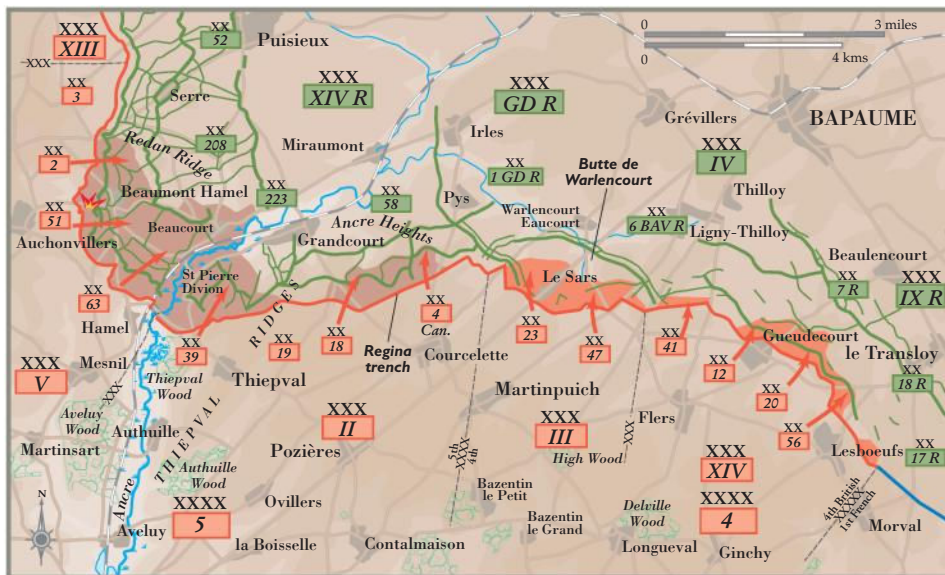


The New Zealand Division

The Division was formed from the two brigades that had fought at Gallipoli in 1915. A month of fighting, from Flers-Courcelette to the Transloy Ridges, cost them nearly 7,000 casualties, but the New Zealanders kept their reputation as one of the elite divisions in the BEF to the end of the war.

“Triple squads carrying on short relays were needed to get the stretchers over the ground, so exhausting was the work”

— Captain J.C. Dunn DSO, MC, DCM, Medical Officer of the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers



THE FINAL SOMME BATTLES: 7 October–19 November 1916

 Allied front line, 7 Oct
  Captured and held, 7 Oct–5 Nov
  Captured and held, 13–19 Nov



General Sir Hubert Gough

In 19 months Gough rose from cavalry brigade commander to army commander on the Somme at the age of 44. Very much Haig's protégé, he was too inclined to be careless about the approach to battle; a serious weakness in the siege conditions of trench warfare, which required painstaking preparation. Made a scapegoat and sacked following the German March 1918 offensive, he was never given the opportunity to prove himself in the mobile warfare that followed, conditions that might have suited his style of command better.

Joffre wrote to both Foch, commanding the French Northern Army Group, and to Haig, saying he wanted a large-scale offensive along the whole Somme front. Haig made clear in his reply that he was not slackening his effort, pointing out that he was the sole judge of what the BEF could undertake and when. Joffre accepted this reminder in good humour. Between 10 and 21 October, the French Sixth Army and the Tenth to its south did carry out offensives, gaining some ground after heavy fighting.

On 1 and 8 October, and again on 21 October, north of the Bapaume Road, the Canadians took heavy casualties in the fight for the Regina Trench on the Ancre Heights, north of Thiepval and Courcellette. The objectives for the final battle of the Somme offensive included Beaucourt, Beaumont Hamel, Redan Ridge and Serre, all 1 July objectives. These were allocated to Gough's Fifth Army, while Rawlinson attacked between Le Sars and Le Transloy, and French Sixth Army fought their final action of the offensive at St Pierre Vaast Wood.

The Fourth Army attacks went in on 23 October and ended on 5 November, ahead of Gough who, delayed by appalling weather, started his assault on 13 November. The attack began in fog, out of which the assaulting troops burst on the surprised Germans. The 63rd (Royal Naval) Division took Beaucourt, largely thanks to Lieutenant Colonel Freyberg commanding the Hood Battalion. Although wounded three times, he carried the advance a mile into the German lines, an action for which he was awarded the VC.



The village of Beaumont Hamel, an objective on 1 July, after its capture in November 1916. The heap of ruins in the centre is the church



Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Freyberg VC

Freyberg, a New Zealand dentist, persuaded Winston Churchill to commission him into the Royal Naval Division. After service at Gallipoli, where he earned a DSO, he commanded the Hood Battalion at the Ancre, where he earned the Victoria Cross won at Beaumont Hamel in November 1916. By the end of the war he had been wounded nine times, and had three DSOs in addition to his VC. He fought throughout the Second World War in Crete, North Africa and Italy, commanding first the New Zealand Division and then the New Zealand Corps.





Meanwhile Major-General “Daddy” Harper’s 51st (Highland) Division captured Beaumont Hamel, following the blowing of 30,000lb of explosive in a new mine in the old Hawthorn Ridge crater, which doubled the size of the hole and blew large numbers of Germans in trenches in the vicinity to eternity.

This division, whose shoulder patch initials – HD – were said to stand for “Harper’s Duds”, because of its previous poor showing, was now on its way towards becoming one of the best divisions in the BEF. Serre and Redan Ridge, however, remained untaken.

On 19 November, the Somme offensive ground to a halt nearly five months after it began with such high hopes. Figures for German casualties on the Somme vary between 500,000 and 600,000 killed, wounded, missing and prisoners, dwarfing their losses at Verdun.

The French suffered 204,253 casualties, the British 419,654; of these 127,751 British soldiers died between 1 July and 20 November 1916, at an average of 893 a day.



A field kitchen on the Ancre. Hot food was a major factor in maintaining morale

ITEM 32

Letter by German soldier Herman Max Pechstein relating his experiences on the Somme.

26.x.16

My dear Alex

I was sincerely delighted to receive your dear note, all the more because I have received so little post lately. We will soon have these days on the Somme behind us, thank God for now, and it's my dearest hope that the next time will not come too soon. Because it takes a damned good measure of courage to keep your zest for life. So much is just damned well against all human dignity. Up to now the British have not managed any success in our Division's sector, just like last time when we were holed up around Courcellette, at present we are on the Bapaume road. But that is by the by, above all my dear, let us think about later and our peacetime work, the thought keeps me afloat, I say to myself I must reserve as much energy for myself so that when these nerve-racking years are past, I can do as much for my art as I want to do and must do.

But truly, the spoken word expresses everything so much better than the written, because what is missing is the dialogue I hope for, and may it come very soon. I miss so many things, and you are perfectly right, grit our teeth and keep hoping. I must end now, as I have to get back to work, therefore many greetings indeed with my best wishes for you.

Your Max



Doch wirklich Alles lasse ich besser mit Worten ausdrücken als schreiben, denn es fehlt die Zweisprache, auf welche ich hoffe, und möchte es doch recht bald sein. Es fehlt einem das viele, und du hast voll und ganz recht, fühne zusammen und weiter geschafft. Nun muss ich aufhören, da ich weiter schreiben muss, so sei also recht herzlich begrüßt mit den besten Wünschen für dich dein Max

ITEM 33

Selected text from page 3 of the 15 October edition of *Le Gafouiller* trench newspaper.

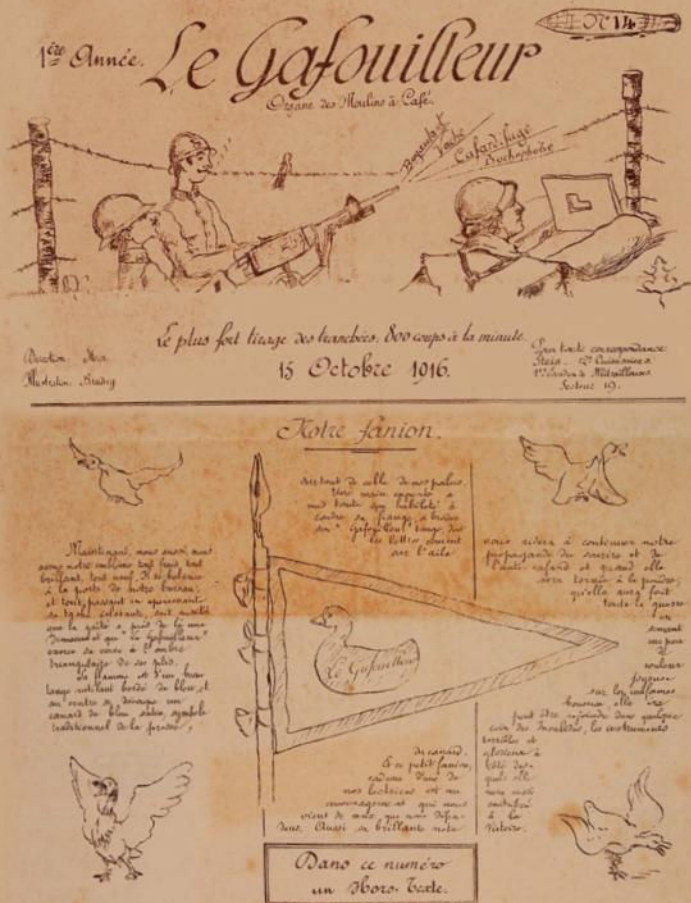
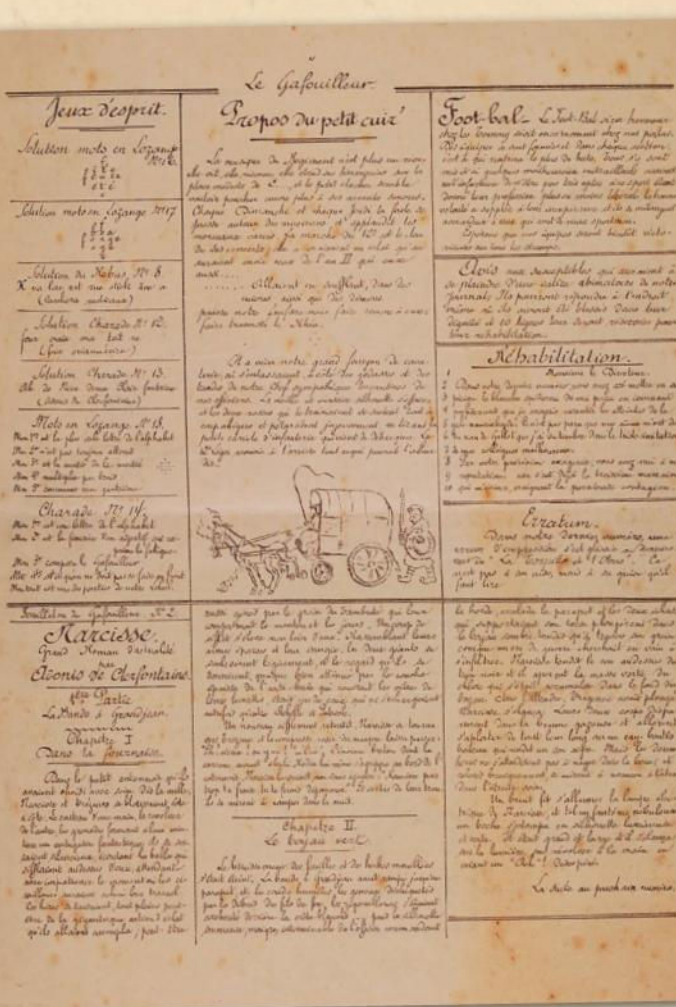
ANGLOMANIA

England has never been so much in fashion. Everyone wants to have their khaki shirts laundered in London. A recent decree acknowledges for French tommies the right so long [illegible] to shave off their moustaches. Tipperary is sung in the streets and the officer marching in front, in his pre-Raphaelite slimness, reminds one of a Burne-Jones retouched by Fabiano. Bridge is played in all the barracks, five o'clock tea is served in all the NAAFI's and whether they like or not, everyone plays sport. The battalion has hardly reached the pitch when goals are scored, the football match begins and the air rings with English expressions given an unexpected flavour by the Parisian accent.

There is talk of organizing a committee for the other ranks' Christmas who will be responsible for sending our noble lads parcels of traditional plum pudding.

Cartoon entitled "OPTIMISM"

Soldier seated reading newspaper: "Blast, they say they're going to postpone it for the Winter campaign" Soldier standing: "Great, that leaves me a smidgeon of hope that my perm will last!"



FRENCH COUNTER-ATTACK

Mangin Strikes Back

Although the German offensive at Verdun had been called off after 14 July, fighting had continued through August and early September as the French attacked again and again, with very little to show for their efforts. On 4 September, the 1,400-yard-long Tavannes railway tunnel, which was crammed end to end with first aid posts, ammunition and fuel dumps and sleeping quarters for reserve units, became the scene of a self-inflicted horror. One end was a mere 500 yards from the front line and under German observation. Units deployed nearby found it a handy refuge from shelling. A chain reaction of explosions caused by an ammunition accident sent flames roaring down the length of the tunnel, killing over 500 men. Soldiers rushing to flee the flames were shelled by the Germans.

By early on in September, Hindenburg had already ordered that German activity on the Verdun sector was to be restricted to holding ground and nothing more. This coincided with the French pausing to draw breath ahead of a massive counter-stroke that was being planned

by Pétain and Nivelle. For a while, the intensity of the battle subsided.

Pétain oversaw preparations for the forthcoming operation, while detailed planning was Nivelle's responsibility. Eight and a half divisions under Mangin were to assault along the whole of the right bank sector; their objective was Fort Douaumont. Pétain collected over 650 guns, of which half were heavy pieces. They included two 400mm Schneider-Creusot superheavy railway guns with longer range and penetrating power than the 370mm guns used by Mangin in his earlier failed attempt to recapture Douaumont. These 400mm monsters lurked under camouflage netting well in the rear, their existence unsuspected by the Germans.

Comprehensive rehearsals were carried out by all the assaulting formations on a piece of ground laid out to replicate the terrain they would have to advance over. Fort Douaumont itself was to be taken by the 38th Division, consisting largely of African troops. It was on 19 October that the French barrage began.



The Tavannes Tunnel, where 500 men perished



A group of the first soldiers to retake Fort Douaumont

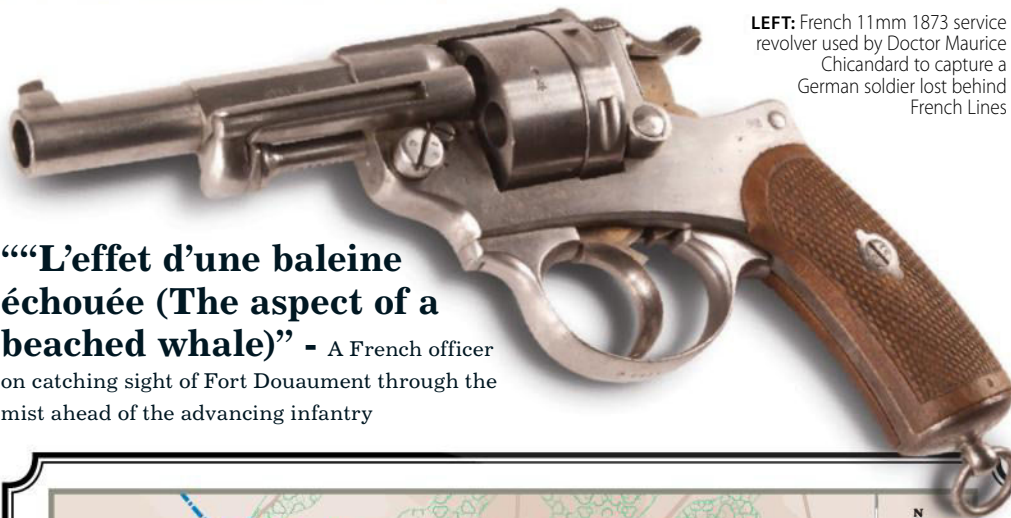
French troops advancing out of Verdun towards Fort Douaumont



For four days, Douaumont seemed to be impervious to the shells raining down on it. On 22 September, the French barrage ceased and the Germans heard cheering from the French trenches. The German guns opened up, giving away their hitherto concealed positions, and drawing immediate retribution from the French artillery. It was a trick; the French infantry remained in their trenches for another two days.

At midday on 23 October a gigantic shell penetrated Douaumont's roof into the sickbay, killing 50 men, followed by another that devastated a barrack-room and casemate. At regular intervals, and with uncanny accuracy, more 400mm shells crashed through the eight-foot-thick concrete roof, causing immense

LEFT: French 11mm 1873 service revolver used by Doctor Maurice Chicandard to capture a German soldier lost behind French Lines



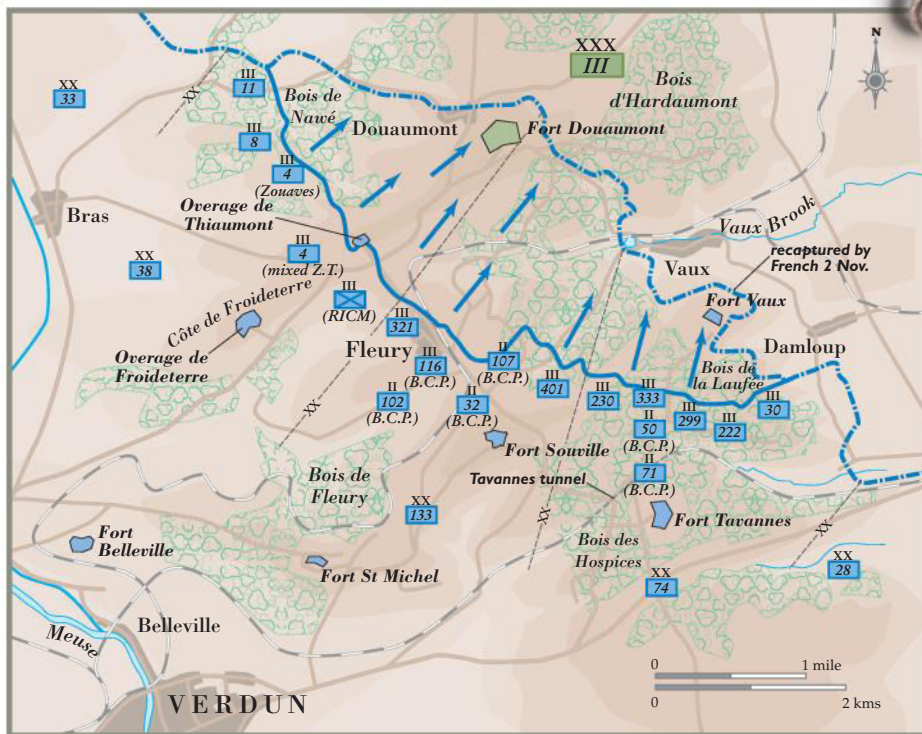
“‘L'effet d'une baleine échouée (The aspect of a beached whale)’” - A French officer on catching sight of Fort Douaumont through the mist ahead of the advancing infantry

internal damage. The German garrison withdrew from the upper levels, but the lower ones became filled with poisonous fumes after a shell ignited explosives in one of the magazines. As fires raged along the passageways, the garrison commander, Major Rosendahl, gave the order to abandon. About 20 men under Captain Prollius reoccupied it the next day, but were not reinforced, despite urgent pleas.

On the morning of 24 October, the French, well rehearsed, advanced under the cover of thick mist. The Germans heard the trumpets sounding the charge, instantly followed by the leading wave of French infantry hurling themselves into the trenches. The German counter-bombardment was too late. As the French swept on, position after position fell.

Mangin, waiting anxiously for news on top of Fort Souville, peered into the fog, but could see nothing. Then, in the afternoon, the mist parted and rays of sunlight lit up Fort Douaumont and the figures of the Moroccan soldiers of Major Nicolai's battalion of the Regiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc on its dome.

On 24 October, the French had seized back in one day ground that the German Crown Prince had taken four and a half months to gain. By 2 November, Fort Vaux, abandoned by the Germans and partially demolished, was also back in French hands. Verdun was finally safe.



FRENCH COUNTER-ATTACK AT VERDUN:
24 October–3 November 1916

French front lines: — 24 Oct - - - 3 Nov



Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc (RICM)

Originally raised from French troops serving in Morocco, by 1916 the regiment included Moroccans, Somalis and Senegalese. In the assault on Fort Douaumont, the RICM lost 23 officers and 829 soldiers. Major Nicolai's battalion returned with little over 100 survivors of the 800 who arrived at Verdun on 20 October. The President of France decorated the regimental colours with the Cross of the Légion d'honneur, the first such regiment to be honoured other than for capturing enemy standards.

**ITEM 34****Selected headline text from the 25 October 1916 edition of Le Matin newspaper.**

Victory at Verdun

A MAGNIFICENT OFFENSIVE

Our troops attacked on a seven kilometre front with an irresistible impetus. The enemy line collapsed everywhere to a depth which was as much as three kilometres at its centre.

WE RECAPTURED THE FORT AND THE VILLAGE OF DOUAUMONT

3,500 prisoners taken of whom 100 were officers.

On the Verdun front, after an intense artillery preparation, the planned attack on the right bank of the Meuse was launched at 11.40 a.m. The enemy line was attached on a seven kilometre-wide front which collapsed everywhere to a depth which at its centre was as much as three kilometres. The village and fort of Douaumont are in our possession. On the left, our troops advanced past the fortifications and farm of Thiaumont and captured the quarries of Haudomont and established positions along the road from Bras to Douaumont.

Near the fort, our line passed north of the wood of La Caillette, along the western edge of the village of Vaux, the eastern edge of the Fumin wood and continued north of Chenois wood and the battery at Damloup.

The prisoners flow in: their numbers counted at present have reached three thousand five hundred of which one hundred are officers. The armaments captured have not yet been counted. Our losses are few.

ITEM 35

The last carrier pigeon message that was sent from the German defenders of Fort Douaumont.

Sender: Combat Group Commander's Adjutant,
25th Reserve Division To: Acting Commander
25th Reserve Div Date: 24 October 1916 Time:
12:50 Number of pigeons: 2 (nos 115, 50)

To: Acting Commander 25th Reserve Div

The entire combat position in sector A has been completely smashed by a violent barrage of shells of all calibres which has been raging uninterrupted since 8 o'clock this morning. Some men who escaped the fire indicate that their guns and hand grenades have been buried and that those of the garrison who remain alive are completely incapable of fighting. The whole hillside of Thiaumont, the Ablain hilltop, the rear area are also suffering the most violent bombardment. Under these conditions the position will not be tenable in the event of an enemy attack, the less so since the reserve company at Thiaumont is in disarray because of men being sent up the line and the losses sustained, and because the combat group commander has in reserve only about five groups who arrived from the Ablain ravine. It is absolutely necessary to bring up reinforcements (at least 1 battalion) as quickly as possible and to put our heavy artillery into effective action.

Signed: officer (illegible) commanding the 1st battalion of the 118th Infantry Regiment

Nr. | Absender:
K.T.A.A. 25. Res Div.

Der Kampf. Heute
die gesamte Kampfstellung
im Sektor A ist durch einen
heftigen Artilleriebeschuss
völlig zerstört. Die
Grenatenschüsse sind
verloren. Die Stellung
ist nicht mehr zu halten.
Die Ablain Höhe, der
Thiaumont Hügel, der
Rear Bereich sind ebenfalls
heftig bombardiert.
Unter diesen Umständen
wird die Stellung nicht
halten. Es ist dringend
erforderlich, Verstärkungen
(mindestens 1 Bataillon)
so schnell wie möglich
herbeizuführen und die
schwere Artillerie in
effektive Aktion zu bringen.

Empfänger:		Datum:	Tageszeit:
Rgt. Lit. n. D. 25. Res Div		24. 10. 16	
Eingetroffen ist dortige Depesche:	Es fehlt noch dortige Depesche:	Ankunftsbestätigung fehlt über hiesige Depesche:	Zahl und Nr. der Tauben:
			2

Dienst 25. Res Div.
 Der Kaffee mit A ist hier fertig
 über, und hat 80 Korn. in ein
 absetzt. Dies kann sehr gut sein
 in. Günstigsten noch ist in.
 ist hier, ungenügend für.
 ist mit auf den gegebenen Thier
 in den gegebenen Finken.
 der ist die Stellung im Falle
 in fallen, nimmt die Kapazität
 in den und von in in der
 T. K. mit 5 und der Albin. sehr
 für die Aufzucht haben. Mithin
 von Verstärkung (Mithin)
 in den und in der
 in den und in der

MANGIN'S THREE-DAY BATTLE

“Chastisement”

FRI 15 DEC – MON 18 DEC

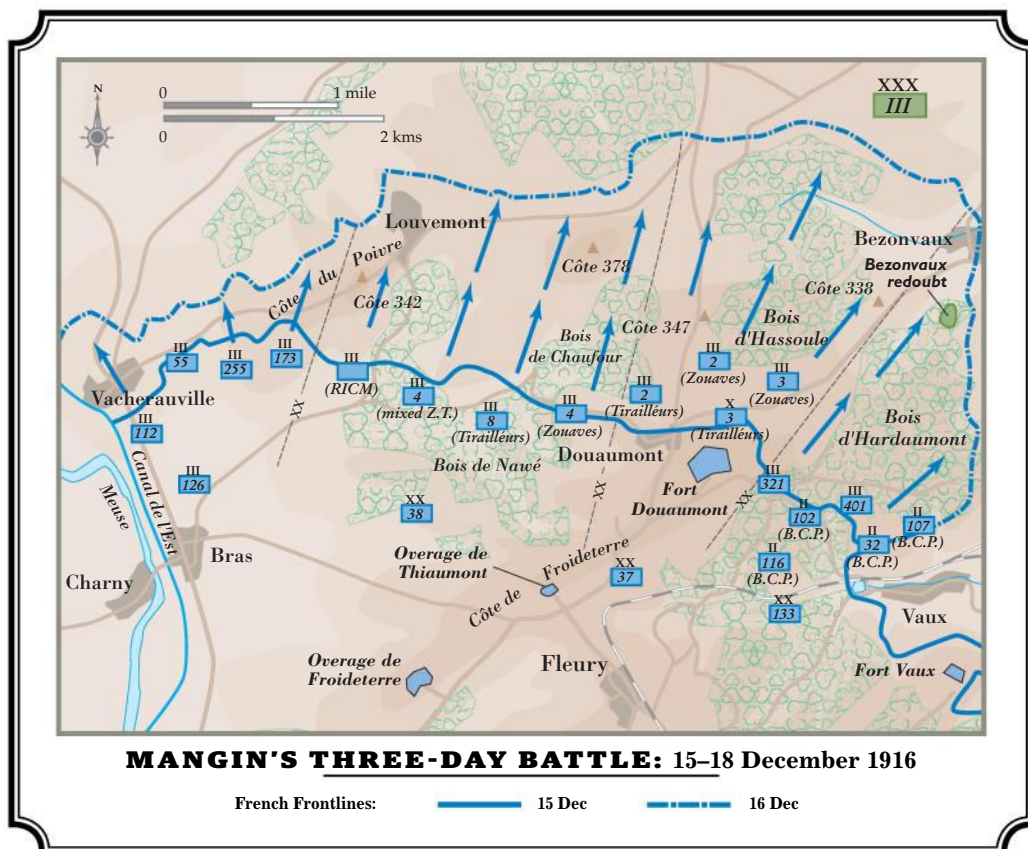
Before the attack of 24 October, a French officer had reported seeing Mangin, with eyes narrowed, licking his lips like a cat and vowing chastisement on the Germans. Now, after the capture of Forts Douaumont and Vaux, Nivelle and Mangin were far from willing to close down the battle, instead they were eager to wring the utmost from their successes by pressing the Germans as hard as they could.

On 11 December a renewed French bombardment began, building up in intensity. All the ravines and German artillery positions along the line Louvemont–Côte 378–Bezonvaux Redoubt were drenched with gas shells. After two hours of drum fire (a continuous high-intensity programme of fire) along the whole sector on the right bank between Vacherauville and Vaux Village, Mangin attacked at 11am on 15 December along the six-mile front, with four divisions in action and another four in reserve. In the centre, at Chaufour and north of Douaumont, which straddled the boundary between the attacking French 38th and 37th Divisions, the German 10th and 14th Divisions resisted stubbornly until late in the evening. But to the left and right of these positions, the French 126th, 38th, and 133rd



ABOVE: French soldiers in a captured German trench at Verdun showing the devastating effect of shellfire

RIGHT: German prisoners of war at Verdun



Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc (RICM)

Originally raised from French troops serving in Morocco, by 1916 the regiment included Moroccans, Somalis and Senegalese. During the assault on Fort Douaumont, the RICM lost 23 officers and 829 soldiers. Major Nicolai's battalion returned with little over 100 survivors, out of the 800 who arrived at Verdun on 20 October. The President of France decorated the regimental colours with the Cross of the Légion d'honneur, the first such regiment to be honoured other than for capturing enemy standards.



LEFT: A French type B Model 60mm Brandt compressed-air trench mortar

BELOW: A 1916 French F1 hand grenade

Divisions broke through on a wide front. On the left, Vacherauville, part of Côte de Poivre, Louvemont and Côte 378 were taken by the 126th and 38th Divisions, while on the right the whole Bois de'Hardaumont and Bezonvaux Redoubt ridge fell to the 133rd Division.

As the day progressed, the French extended their initial gains and enveloped the German positions in the centre. Fighting went on well into the late evening. By the evening of 16 December, Mangin had advanced over 3,000 yards beyond Fort Douaumont, recapturing Bezonvaux, the Bois d'Hassoule, the Bois de Chaufour and Louvemont. He took 115 guns, 11,000 prisoners and large quantities of equipment, which included machine guns and mortars. The German Crown Prince acknowledged that it was a crushing defeat.

On the day that Mangin's offensive began, Nivelle was summoned to GQG at Chantilly to take over from Joffre as Commander in Chief of the French armies. Aristide Briand, the French Premier, made the change to placate the Radical Socialist Party, who were disillusioned by Joffre's performance and determined to gain greater



political control over the direction of the war. Nivelle, articulate and skilled at flattering politicians, was the type of general that they felt comfortable with. Besides, he was the hero of Verdun, having effectively trumpeted his success. Pétain was sidelined – for the moment.

Mangin marked the arrival of his erstwhile master at GQG with an order of the day that forecast greater triumphs in the future. He proclaimed, “We know the method, and we have the Chief. Success is certain.”

The battle of Verdun was over, although fighting would flare up there from time to time until the end of the war in November 1918.

French losses at Verdun in 1916 totalled 377,231, of whom 162,308 were killed or missing. The counter-offensive in October and December alone had accounted for 47,000 French casualties. German losses in the ten months of the 1916 battle amounted to around 337,000. For this the Germans acquired, as one writer has commented, “a piece of raddled land little larger than the combined Royal Parks of London”.

So, who won? Falkenhayn’s choice of an attack at Verdun over an offensive in the East is now seen from the high ground of hindsight as a mistake. He could have knocked Russia out of the war at a lower cost. By choosing to “bleed France

white”, he actually ended up bleeding his own army too. To France, the defence of Verdun culminated in a glorious triumph, but at a staggering cost. In truth, it is fair to say that neither side won at Verdun.

“We know the method and we have the Chief. Success is certain” - Mangin

BELOW AND OPPOSITE: These pictures portray the danger that was faced by French infantry attacking across open ground under shellfire





THE LEGACY OF VERDUN

A Long Shadow

In early 1917, it was not only French politicians whom Nivelle persuaded that he held the key to winning the war on the Western Front; his charisma, aided by his command of English (his mother's nationality), also worked on Lloyd George, by now the British Prime Minister.

At the Calais conference from 26–27 February, Lloyd George, beguiled by Nivelle's silver tongue, and mesmerised by his plan to smash through the German lines in about 48 hours, schemed to reduce the BEF's status so that it would effectively be a contingent of the French Army. He failed, but Haig was subordinated to Nivelle for the duration of the offensive.

After changes and delays, Nivelle's eventual plan called for a combined Franco-British diversion in Artois and Picardy, while he mounted the main attack on the Aisne. The latter, involving three armies of 49 infantry divisions, three cavalry divisions and 128 tanks, would smash through in a day and cut in behind the Germans at St Quentin. Had Nivelle attacked in February, according to his original plan, before

the Germans withdrew to the Siegfriedstellung – known to the Allies as the Hindenburg Line – he might have achieved limited success. However, Nivelle's attack on 16 April failed disastrously; by 25 April it had stalled and by 15 May he was fighting to hang on to small gains on the Chemin des Dames between Malmaison and Brimont.

The Germans had been warned of the attack, as it was discussed openly in Paris. The planning was slapdash and the concept of the offensive was viewed with deep reservations by French and British generals alike, with the exception of Mangin, who had been elevated to command French Sixth Army.

Pétain replaced Nivelle as Commander in Chief, and the latter was sent to French North Africa. Pétain was immediately faced with a crisis. The great offensive that promised so much had failed. Few people in Britain know that in 1915 and the first half of 1916 the French bore the brunt of the fighting on the Western Front. The BEF was only engaged in major battles for just over 30 days between Christmas 1914 and 30 June 1916. By the end of 1915, the French Army had



The VERDUN MEDAL

The Verdun City Council, in refuge in Paris, created the non-official French commemorative medal on 20 November 1916 with the following text:

"To the great leaders, to the officers, to the soldiers, to all heroes known or anonymous, living or dead, that have triumphed over the barbarous avalanche and immortalized its name over the entire world for centuries to come, the City of Verdun, unsacked and upstanding on its ruins, dedicated this medal, as a token of its gratitude."

Part of Verdun on 15 December 1916, seen from across the River Meuse





Troops being transported by train in the tunnel network on the Maginot Line in 1939



The grim remains of a French soldier at Verdun in 1916, one of over 162,000 Frenchmen killed there

suffered 1,961,687 casualties, including over a million killed or missing. Add to these ghastly statistics the 362,000 lost at Verdun, 204,000 on the Somme, and further losses in Nivelle's offensive, and it is not surprising that the troops who had fought so valiantly felt betrayed.

French soldiers were badly paid and fed, with shockingly inadequate medical arrangements and a poor system for leave and welfare. By the spring of 1917 the army had had enough. 65 divisions, about two-thirds of the French Army, mutinied or carried out *mouvements collectifs d'indiscipline* ("collective acts of indiscipline"). It was far from being a revolution, as the anti-war Communists would have liked. It mainly took the form of refusals to parade and to move up the line.

Pétain's recipe for restoring order was a carrot and stick arrangement, wherein the carrot lure was better leave arrangements (half the army was sent on leave at once), better food, better pay and no more big offensives. France would wait for the arrival at the front of the Americans, who had just

joined in on the Allied side. He visited units frequently and talked to the soldiers. They trusted him and he did not betray their trust. The stick was to shoot the ringleaders. Precisely how many is still a matter of conjecture, but it was possibly about 48.

Pétain's actions in restoring morale in the French Army made him the saviour of France. This, added to his achievements at Verdun in 1916, made him a heroic figure to most Frenchmen. They remembered this in the hour of crisis in 1940, with disastrous consequences for the country.

The revulsion in the 1920s and 1930s against the tactics employed by the French Army in the First World War, up to and including the Nivelle offensive, led to Pétain calling for a "Wall of France" to defend the country against their traditional enemy. A line of forts was built, named after the Minister for War, ex-sergeant Maginot, who had been wounded at Verdun. It was Forts Douaumont and Vaux writ large, through which "they" (the Germans) would not pass. "They" went round it.



3^e EMPRUNT DE LA DÉFENSE NATIONALE

Souscrivez

RIGHT: A French government poster for the Third National Defence Loan produced in October 1917



ITEM 36

This enduring image embodying the spirit of Verdun, and featuring Pétain's famous rallying cry "*On les aura!*", or "We'll have them!", was used by the French government for its war loans poster of 1916.

On les aura !





2^E EMPRUNT

DE

LA DÉFENSE NATIONALE

Souscrivez

DEVAMBEZ IMP. PARIS

THE LEGACY OF THE SOMME

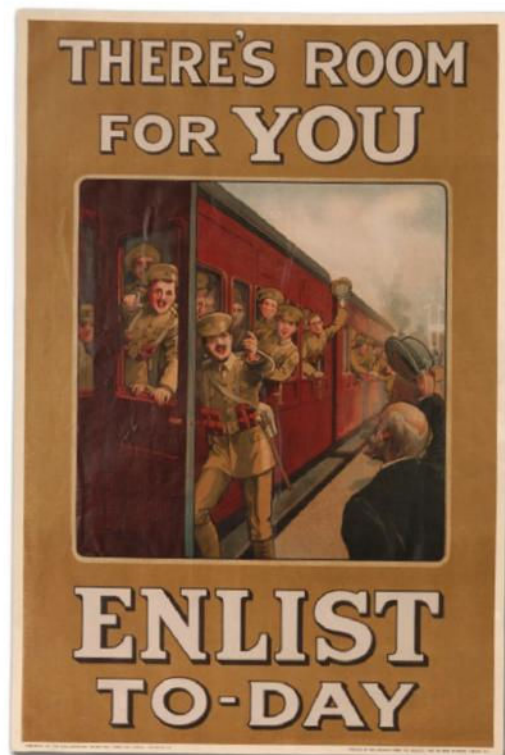
Hardened in the Fire

In British folk-memory, the legacy of the Somme is imagined as a one-day event (1 July 1916) and an all-British affair. In fact, the battle raged on for four and a half months, and the French played a vital part. There were also two more battles of the Somme, both in 1918.

The German view of the Somme is encapsulated in the remark by Captain von Hentig of the Guard Reserve Division that it was "The muddy grave of the German army". The attack on 1 July seized back the initiative for the Allies, which had been lost since the German offensive at Verdun. The Battle of the Somme was not a victory, but it was a strategic success. In February and March 1917, the Germans withdrew

to the previously prepared, enormously strong *Siegfriedstellung* (Hindenburg Line). This shortened the length of front they had to hold, but it was a German acknowledgement that they were not prepared to engage in any more defensive operations on the Somme-Ancre terrain where they had taken such a hammering.

The emergence of the British as a major player on land as well as at sea came as an unpleasant surprise to the Germans, and with it came the realisation that they could not win on the Western Front in 1917. Their reaction was to make an attempt to starve Britain out of the war through unrestricted submarine warfare. Not only did this fail – although only just – but it



RIGHT: A British Army recruitment poster



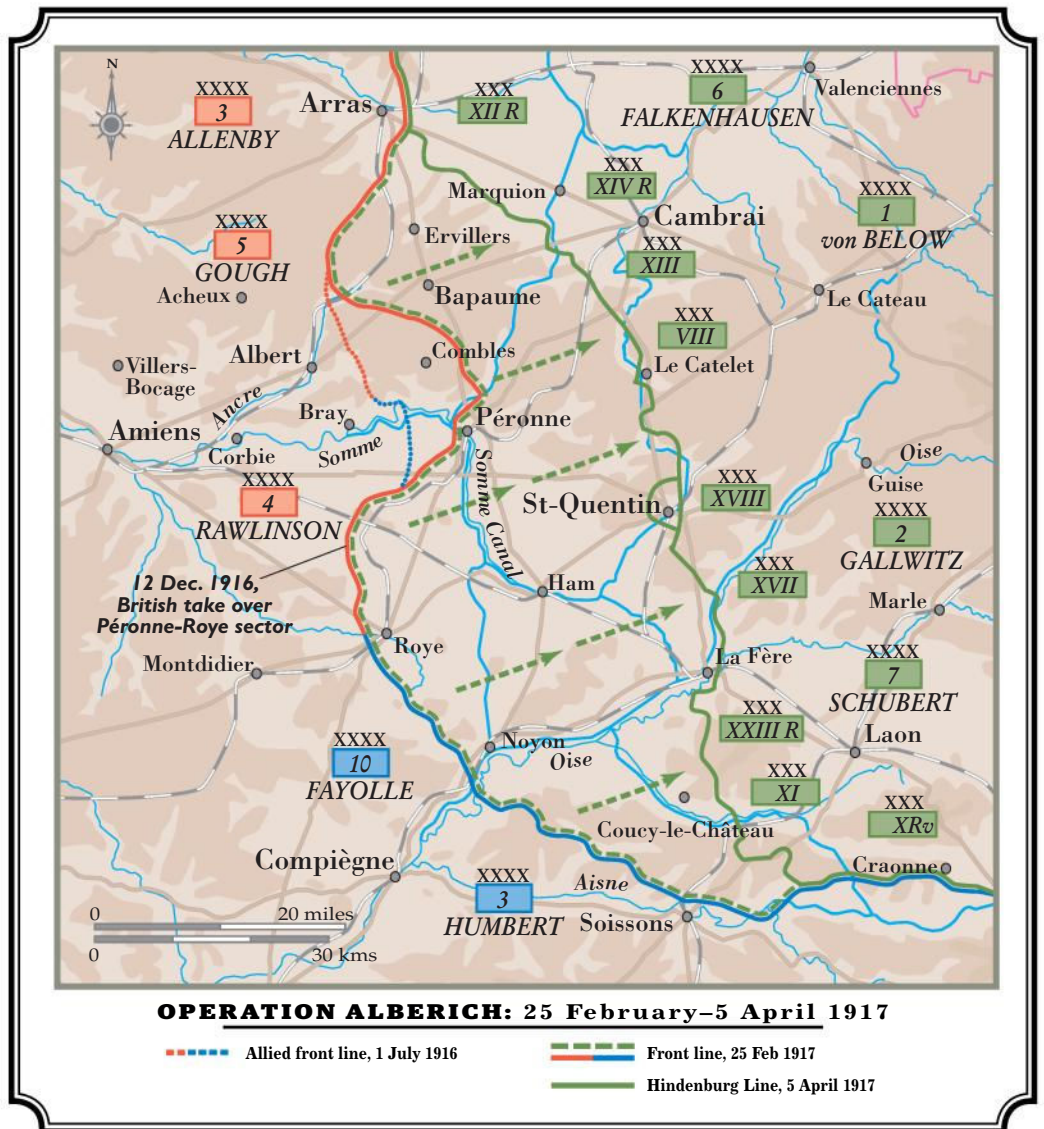
brought America into the war, and hence lost it for Germany.

All three British senior commanders on the Somme, Haig, Rawlinson and Gough, made mistakes and took some time to learn and correct them. But they, along with most other British formation commanders, were at the bottom of a steep learning curve, no less so than the soldiers serving under them. For the troops, the fighting on the Somme was a time of tactical improvement that ultimately enhanced the BEF's fighting power. While the battle was still in progress there was intense analysis of the tactics and the lessons that were learned were promulgated in the form of training memoranda.

The British infantry rediscovered fire and movement, and in the process undoubtedly benefited from French experience. The standard infantry platoon of four rifle sections was reorganised to enable the infantry to close with the enemy after the artillery barrage had lifted, and to fight through to the objective assisted by its own firepower. Linear tactics were out, and



Delville Wood, or "Devil's Wood" as the troops referred to it



the infantry now advanced in “blobs”, able to change direction, engage enemy to a flank and to “flow” past opposition.

Artillery techniques improved hugely in order to provide better support, and by taking advantage of technology such as sound ranging, flash spotting and air photography, the gunners were able to bring down deadly concentrations of shells on enemy positions without the need for pre-registration that gave warning of an impending attack.

The orchestration of the all-arms battle began at the Somme and improved as time went on. In the process, the British army evolved from the

amateur successors to the small 1914 BEF into a highly professional force. The BEF fought and won all-arms deep battle in high-intensity engagements. It could now match the German army, the best in the world at the time, which, unlike the British, had at its disposal at the outbreak of war millions of men trained as soldiers, along with an industry to support them.

The process of transformation that enabled the BEF to win the greatest victories in the history of the British army in 100 days of engagements in autumn 1918 began at the Somme. It became the best-trained and best-led army the British had ever had.



“We must save the men from a second Somme battle” -

Hindenburg, 9 January 1917, at a conference to decide on adopting unrestricted U-boat warfare



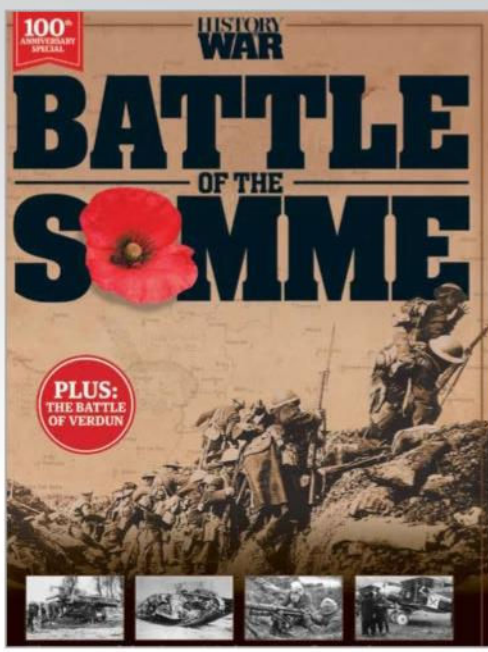


British battlefield burials near Carnoy in July 1916. After the war, the Imperial War Graves Commission replaced temporary crosses with permanent headstones

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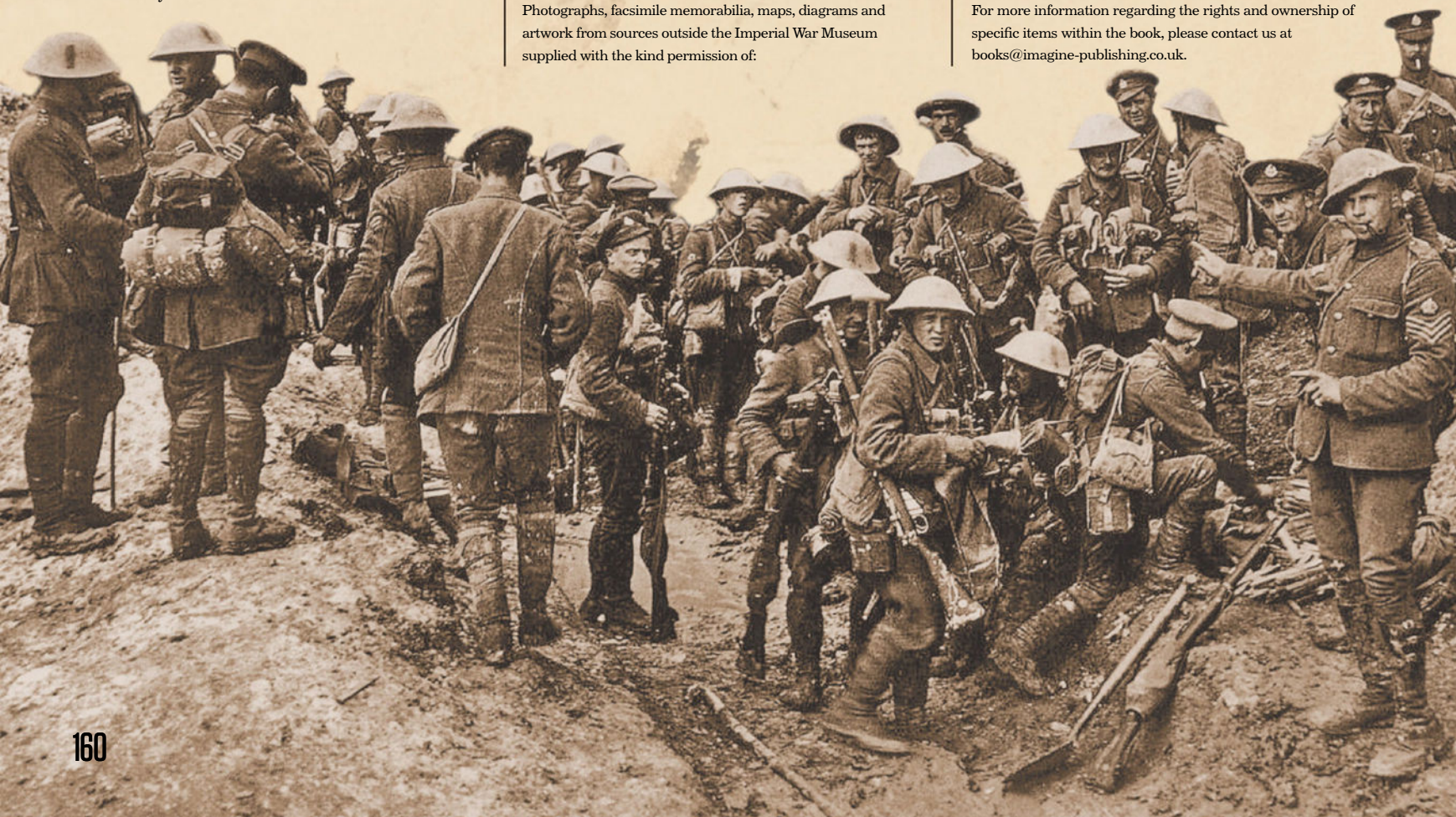
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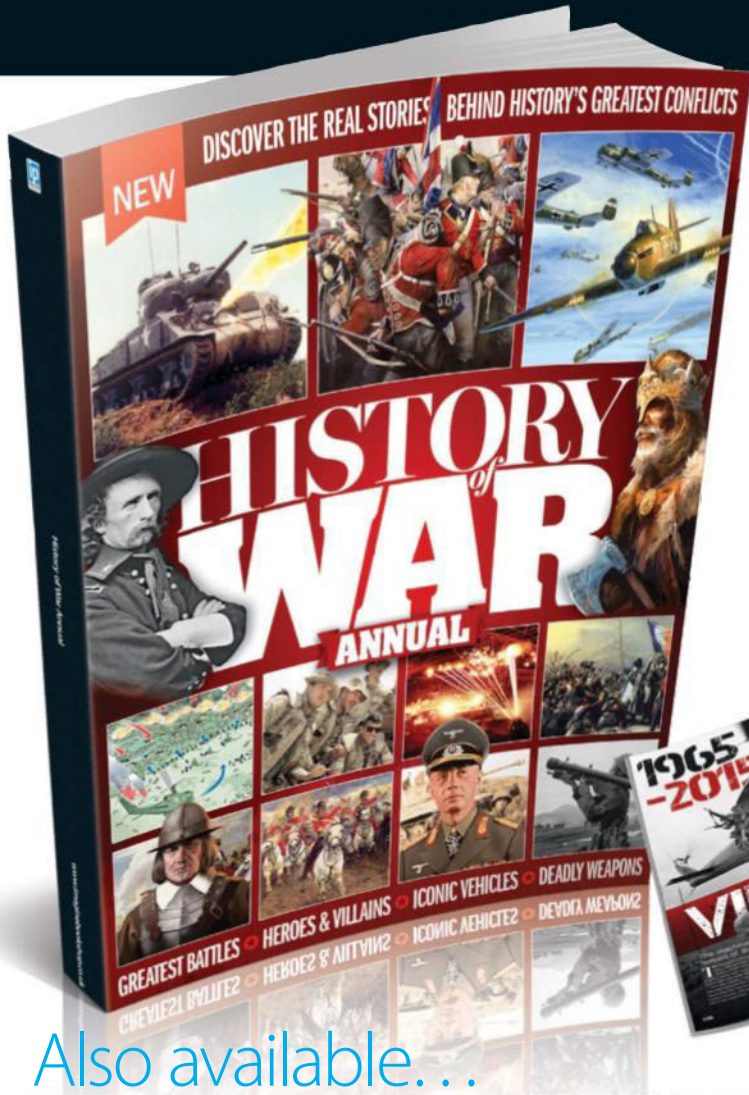




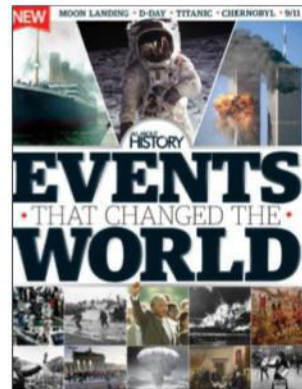
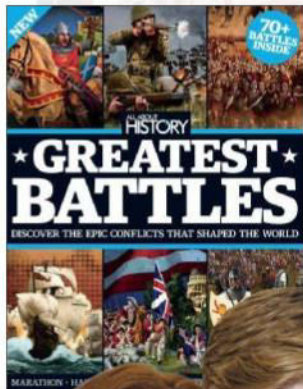
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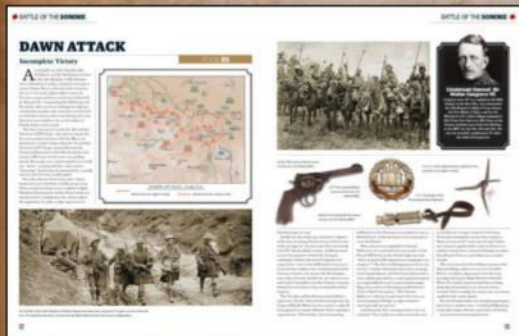
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